The Holy Qur'an

A Guidebook for Every Human Being

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Preface

EVEN TODAY, offering a proper introduction of the last book revealed by the Creator, Master, Lord and God of all human beings to our compatriot brothers and sisters is utmost necessary. And it is not sufficient that we offer this introduction by means of books, folders, lectures, seminars and conferences alone. The actual task of introducing the Qur'an would begin only when the Muslims of this country start following the teachings of the Qur'an. Right from the initial days of Makkah, God Almighty had instructed the Muslims to put in all their efforts to convey the message, teachings and guidance contained in the Qur'an to the people staying there. A crucial aspect of this exercise was that whatever part of the Qur'an had been revealed could be seen manifested in the blessed lives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his virtuous companions.

The primary responsibility of introducing the Qur'an lies with the Muslims. With a few exceptions, this task has been carried out in every age, and with good results. But by and large, the attitude adopted by the Muslims in this regard makes one assume that the Qur'an is their own private religious book, and that people of other communities and religions have some other books to call their own. Since the fact remains that the Lord of the worlds has revealed this book of guidance upon His last and final Messenger for *all* mankind, each and every human being is entitled to it. He should be able to study it and get to know what his Creator wants from him, how he is expected to fulfil His wishes, what is the purpose of creation, how should he achieve

that purpose and what is the way of life ordained by his Creator for his success in this world and salvation in the hereafter.

It is hoped that this book would inspire our non-Muslim brothers and sisters to read and study the Holy Qur'an, that they focus their attention on giving some purpose to their lives, make it meaningful and acquire God-consciousness. The Holy Qur'an shows us the path to attain spirituality, to build up high morals and character and to be good to fellow human beings and to fulfil their rights. There is no other book that can match up to the Qur'an in this regard. This book you hold in your hands would prove beneficial in clarifying many a misunderstanding and misgiving about the Holy Qur'an.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind has initiated a series of public campaigns in various states to introduce the Qur'an to non-Muslim brothers and sisters and to clarify their misunderstandings regarding it:

- Qur'an for All
- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for All
- Islam for All

By God's grace, we have received very encouraging responses and results from these campaigns, and there has arisen a sense of responsibility among the Muslims regarding the Qur'an.

The counsel and guidance of Late Dr. Muhammad Rafat and Dr.Raziul Islam Nadvi have been productive in compiling this book. I am extremely grateful to them both. Thanks is also due to Dr. Parvez Mandviwala who has very diligently rendered

this work from Urdu into English. May Allah reward him abundantly. Aameen.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank Mr. Zaheer Ahmad of the Dept. of Dawah. I am also thankful to my wife, Atiya Parveen and my daughter, Nikhat Fatimah *sallamaha* who is pursuing her final year MSc. from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi for having taken over my domestic burdens, allowing me to concentrate on this work. May God Almighty reward them all abundantly. Aameen.

I pray that the objective of writing this book is met.

Muhammad Iqbal Mulla
New Delhi, June 30, 2021

1
A Question

TO ALL THOSE brothers and sisters who have not yet deemed it necessary to study the Qur'an, out of the flawed assumption that it is a community book of Muslims alone.

The Creator, Lord and Master who has gifted the Qur'an to all humanity is the same God who has created us all. Just as He has made the light and warmth of the sun, the moonlight and solace of the night, the wind and the air for every person on earth, He has also sent the Holy Qur'an for one and all.

Who is the Creator? What is He? What are His attributes? What does it mean to believe in Him? What does He want from us? Which are the things that He would like us to do and which are those things that He would like us to avoid? How should man fulfil the purpose of his creation so as to gain the good pleasure of the Creator? What is the true nature of death? How should a person obtain the eternal pleasure (Paradise) of His Creator in the afterlife and save himself from His wrath (Hellfire)? These are those questions which have a deep relation with the lifestyle, attitude, salvation and character of each and every person. The only sincere and correct answers to these questions can be those which God has provided us with. The Holy Qur'an is essentially a complete and holistic book of guidance which provides sincere and correct answers to these questions. It is nothing less than a life manual.

The Holy Qur'an does not refute the previously revealed divine scriptures. On the contrary, it is presents an explanation of their teachings in a pure and unadulterated form, and thus guides mankind towards a complete and holistic way of life.

So do you not feel it is necessary to study the Qur'an before your life enters its twilight hours? Would you not like to save yourself from an eternal loss and dreadful end after your death?

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2

A Few Things to Note Before You Begin This Book

A FEW WORDS for my readers, especially my non-Muslim brothers and sisters:

This book contains references to many books and their respective authors. The books which have so been referred are in Urdu. The translations of all those books in other languages are not as yet available.

The readers are requested to mail in their suggestions and feedback, if any, to yours truly after they have finished reading this book. If some point is not clear to you or you have some doubts or questions, or you find some error or mistake in what I have written, you are requested to write in to me. I shall make the necessary corrections.

This book contains ayaat of the Qur'an along with their translations. Likewise, the supplications made by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and aHadith have also been included. The readers are expected to respect the words of God and those of His Messenger ﷺ.

Muslims are also requested to study this book in detail. You would get an introduction to the Qur'an in these pages, which you can use while gifting a translated copy of the Qur'an to fellow countrymen. You may gift them this book along with the

translation of the Qur'an, so that they may read it before embarking upon a study of the Holy Qur'an.

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3

What is the Qur'an?

MAN IS THE highest and best form of creation on this earth. This is because he has been bestowed with intellect, consciousness and some will power, authority and liberty. He has hence been referred to as *Ashraf alMakhluqaat* (the best of creations). The entire universe has been made subservient to him. Many forms of creation have been made to abide by a law and entrusted with the task of serving man. Serving and being beneficial to man is their *raison d'être*. They have an important role to play in man's security, survival and development. If man indeed contemplates upon his surroundings, he would notice that everything near and far, living and non-living has been subjugated to his service.

God Almighty has fulfilled every physical and material need of human beings and other forms of creation in the best possible manner. And He alone can do so. There is no other entity in this universe that can do this. This is because God is not only their Creator; He is also their Lord and Caretaker. There is no form of creation other than human beings which has spiritual and moral requirements. Hence, they do not require moral restrictions or a system of life to govern them.

These things and creatures have been given the form they required to serve human beings. Look at the birds! Look how they fly in the air. Look at the fish swimming in the water. The honey bee expends great amount of planning, effort and time to

provide us with a drink as precious as honey, which not only nourishes us, but also has medicinal properties. Even the various types of bacteria help in the production and ripening of fruits, flowers and other articles of consumption. Without them, life would have been difficult on earth. When God has designated a purpose of creation for these living and non-living forms of creation, and had guided them to this end, then how can it be assumed that while He has made man the best of creations He has not designated any purpose for him or guided him towards achieving that purpose? How can it be assumed that while He has fulfilled his physical needs in the best possible manner, He has left his spiritual and moral needs unfulfilled and left him to wander unattended? This is beyond comprehension! It is an irrefutable fact that man's physical body is temporary, limited and earthly, whereas his spiritual and moral part is eternal, limitless and heavenly. Thus, what remains after death is his spiritual and moral being, his good and bad deeds and their effects, which never die.

When God has made such a sophisticated system for living and non-living things, then it was His responsibility alone to make a system for man's spiritual and moral life too. Just as man's physical life can sustain itself only by making use of His system (air, water, sunlight etc.), he can obtain peace, sanctity, balance and justice only by abiding by the guidelines He has prescribed for his spiritual and moral life. This is the only way by which he can protect himself from injustice and tyranny, extremism, corruption and discord.

The question that needs to be asked is: 'What system has God put in place for man's spiritual and moral guidance?'

As we have mentioned above, man possesses intellect and consciousness. God has also granted him some authority and

free will. He is, therefore, accountable before his Creator. Hence, it is necessary that the purpose for which God has created him should be absolutely clear to him. Likewise, he should also be acquainted with the rights, duties and responsibilities which have been stipulated for him, so that he might achieve success in this examination of life and avoid failure in the accountability of the hereafter. Accordingly, God gave him knowledge of these key and fundamental truths and gave him a holistic plan for all walks of life, including those pertaining to his spiritual and moral aspects. For this, God selected prophets and messengers from among human beings and entrusted them with the task of guiding others. A series of prophets and messengers kept coming over the years to guide various communities and nations. The last of these was Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

God also instituted the practice of sending books and scriptures to guide and reform human beings. This system was called 'prophethood'. We do not have a complete historical data or record of the books and scriptures revealed by God upon various prophets and messengers, but we do find mention of 'Scripture of Abraham', 'Scripture of Moses', Psalms, Torah and the Gospel in the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an is the final heavenly book. It is quite possible that prophets must have been sent to such an ancient civilisation like India as well, and that books and scriptures must also have been revealed upon these prophets. It was 570 years after Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was born. The Gospel has been revealed upon Jesus Christ. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last and final messenger of God, and the Qur'an was revealed upon him over a period of 33 years, a little at a time. This means that the Qur'an is not the first such book. The books God had revealed before the Qur'an could not remain preserved in their

original form. But meticulous care was taken to preserve the Qur'an right from day one. This has ensured that the Qur'an is present with us in its original form. It is brimming with guidance for mankind. The chaste and blessed life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, on whom the Qur'an has been revealed, is a practical emulation of Qur'anic teachings.

The Holy Qur'an does not refute the heavenly books and scriptures revealed before it. What it claims is that the divine guidance contained in those books could not remain preserved. The custodians of those books made alterations in the text and corrupted its content. The Qur'an now presents the original teachings contained in those books. It does not preach a new doctrine or convey a new message. This essentially means that the previous books have become obsolete. While it is necessary to honour the true teachings contained in those books, it is utmost important to turn to the Qur'an for guidance. The Qur'an acts as a touchstone. This is because the previous books had also been revealed by God, but the guidance contained therein has been obscured by human corruption. All those books should logically have shown us the same path. But they all seem to lead towards different paths and offer different, mutually conflicting teachings. This clearly shows that the message these corrupted books now convey is not the message they were originally meant to convey. The Qur'an has remained untouched of all human interference and corruption. Having faith in the Qur'an is akin to having faith in all the previously revealed heavenly books, and rejecting the Qur'an is akin to rejecting them all.

Noted author, Mr. Naeem Siddiqui, has this to say while discussing some important aspects of the Qur'an:

"This is the sole book before us which does not contain any ambiguous text. No principle, no command, no analysis and no comment can be found here which is vague or uncertain. Everything has been said with complete conviction. Each and every sentence of this book reflects the fact that the author of this book had no apprehension whatsoever of getting falsified. Unlike human compositions, no such weakness can be delineated in any line.

This book is a specimen of truth and confidence. It does not relate to fiction. Instead, it deals with the core realities and issues of life in a serious and dignified manner."

[Sehroza Dawat, New Delhi, 10th May 2017]

He further writes:

"Christians, Jews, Hindus and other religious groups have used the term 'religion'. The Qur'an, in fact, presents the complete deen (the entire system of life encompassing all its components). That is to say, it is a guidebook to life. It prescribes a system of life and culture. The government that is required to run this cultural system has been explained in this book, and so has the movement that is required to establish such a government. Moreover, the qualities expected from the organisation, the group, and the people who would run this prescribed state and movement are also discussed.

The subject of this book is 'man', and it deals with each and every aspect of a human being. It discusses life as a whole, as a single unit. It can be said that this book is a particular kind of sociology book, an entire formula for a complete social system. Such a book should ideally deal with each and every aspect of life and every branch of knowledge. But unlike our contemporary pattern of dividing knowledge into component subjects, this book does not pertain to any particular branch of knowledge per se. Rather, it presents a knowledge that encompasses all fields of knowledge; a

knowledge that systemises and harmonises all fields of knowledge under some firm and fundamental principles. This book calls it al'ilm (the knowledge), and it refers to that fundamental guiding knowledge that is imperative and absolutely required for the collective success of human life. It is that guiding knowledge which purges and maintains all individual sciences and ideologies on a righteous course and prevents them from going wayward.

The knowledge on which the Qur'an is based contains those fundamental truths which govern this universe and according to which this life comes into existence and develops. This knowledge also contains those historical principles which dictate the rise and fall of nations. Finally, it is also composed of those moral values which beautify the individual and collective lives of human beings, and which, if abandoned, lead to chaos and corruption. These are those principles which blend his life with the universal truths and make him worthy of divine pleasure." *[ibid]*

How should a religious book be? What should it be like? Logic tells us that such a book should offer a proper introduction of God, narrate His attributes and explain what entails believing in God and what entails rejecting or disobeying Him. The Qur'an draws man closer to God. It regards His true love and good pleasure as the greatest possible thing anyone can gather. It prepares man to sacrifice everything he has in the pursuit of God's love and pleasure.

Naeem Siddiqui writes:

"One of the greatest things about this book is that it draws its reader closer to God, and draws God closer to him. The restricted, weak and erroneous but popular perception about God that He is some alien entity who has only a cursory relation with man gets dispelled once he starts reading this Book. The God spoken about in the Qur'an is such that the reader finds Him right before him,

around him and in his very heart. As soon as the reader enters the Qur'an, he notices that God has a deep relation with him, a deep sense of love and empathy for him, that God has a keen interest in him, and that He is with him in his thoughts, partaking in his deeds. He feels as if God is listening to his prayers, responding to his calls, making his endeavours succeed, showering him with all that is good and protecting him from evil. When the reader of the Qur'an responds to the clarion call of the Qur'an and stands up to fight evil and injustice with righteousness and piety, he cannot help but notice that God Himself is by his side in this fight. He is before him, behind him, to his right and left, and in the deepest recesses of his heart. Moreover, the visual narration of the Qur'an is so appealing that it puts up the sketches of the Day of Judgement before the reader in vivid detail. He can see the divine court of law set up in the hereafter, and he sees the doors of death leading to that court wide open before him. It is a court where no person can get away by offering a bribe, nor can intercession help, nor can anyone offer compensation, nor can anyone avail a shrewd lawyer, nor can friends and relatives be of any aid, nor can crying and wailing bring any relief. The established system of that court, instead, is that whoever has performed an atom's worth of good deeds would find it before him and whoever has done an atom's worth of bad deeds would find it before him." *[ibid]*

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4

The Holy Qur'an
Some Important Facts

THE HOLY QUR'AN has been revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (who is the last and final messenger of God) by God, stage by stage over a period of some 23 years.

After being commissioned a messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stayed in Makkah for thirteen years and lived in Madinah for another ten years. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to receive God's messages by means of *wahi* (revelation). We shall discuss about revelation in the following pages. Before we embark upon a study of the Qur'an, it is important to understand what revelation is. But before that, it would be germane to note a few important things.

The Qur'an literally means something that is read.

The Qur'an was revealed in a span of 22 years, 5 months and 14 days.

The Qur'an mentions 25 messengers by name. Some of these are:

1. Adam, 2.Noah, 3.Abraham, 4.Ishmael, 5.Isaac, 6.Lot, 7.Joseph, 8.Moses, 9.Aaron, 10.Jesus, 11.Muhammad/Ahmad (May peace and blessings be upon all prophets)

The angel who used to bring the revelation to Prophet Muhammad was Archangel Gabriel.

The first passage of the Qur'an was revealed in the Hira Cave. Here, Muhammad ﷺ used to sit in seclusion, contemplating about the Arabs' grave condition and keeping himself busy in worship. The Hira Cave is located on Mt. Noor, five and a half kilometres to the east of Makkah. Archangel Gabriel came to this cave and told Muhammad that God had made him His messenger. He introduced himself as Gabriel. Muhammad was 40 years old at that time. The first five ayaat of Surah al Alaq were revealed on this occassion.

اِقْرَاْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ ۚ﴿۱﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۚ﴿۲﴾ اِقْرَاْ وَرَبُّكَ
الْاَكْرَمُ ۙ﴿۳﴾ الَّذِیْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۙ﴿۴﴾ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ یَعْلَمْ ؕ﴿۵﴾

"Read in the name of your Lord, who created- Created man out of a clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And your Lord is Most Bountiful- He who taught by means of the pen; taught man that which he knew not." *[Al-Alaq 96: 1-5]*

The first complete Surah to be revealed was Surah al Fatihah:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ۙ﴿۱﴾ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ ۙ﴿۲﴾ مٰلِكِ یَوْمِ الدِّیْنِ ؕ﴿۳﴾ اِیَّاكَ
نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ ؕ﴿۴﴾ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِیْمَ ۙ﴿۵﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِیْنَ
اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِمْ ۙ غَیْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَیْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّیْنَ ۧ﴿۶﴾

"To God is due all praise and gratitude, who is the Lord of the worlds. Most Gracious, most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgement. You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path- the path of those on whom You have rewarded, not the path of those on whom has descended Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray." *[Al-Fatihah 1: 1-7]*

The Qur'anic word 'ayaat' literally means signs. The signs spread across the universe are also called ayaat (singular: ayat). Man inches towards God by pondering over these ayaat or signs.

God has collected these ayaat in 114 Surahs. The break-up into *para* and *ruku* has, however, been done by scholars to facilitate daily recitation. The Qur'an has thus been divided into 30 *paras*. Likewise, ayaat have been grouped into *rukus*. Since the division of the Qur'anic text into *paras* and *rukus* has been done by scholars (and not by God Himself), their symbols are mentioned outside the page margins so that they are seen as distinct from the divine text.

'Surah' literally means fence or boundary. Just as a boundary separates and distinguishes a city from the surrounding land, every Surah distinguishes that part of the Qur'an from its other parts. And just as a fence protects the city, the words and subject matter of the Qur'an have been secured by grouping them into 114 Surahs.

[*Ma'alumaat-e Qur'an*, Ali Asghar Chaudhary]

The 114 Surahs of the Qur'an have further been divided into Makkan and Madinan ones.

When the Prophet was forced to endure unbearable hardships in Makkah, God asked him and his companions to migrate to Madinah. This Hijrat or migration is one of the turning points in Islamic history. The conditions at Madinah were altogether different, and the revelation of the Qur'an continued here for ten years, until the Prophet passed away.

The part of the Qur'an that was revealed before the Hijrah has been compiled into 86 Surahs called Makkan Surahs, while the part of the Qur'an that was revealed after the Hijrah has been compiled into 28 Surahs called Madinan Surahs.

This is a short introduction of the Qur'an and some important information related to it. It is now time to understand more about *wahi* (divine revelation) which is the mode of divine communication that has been employed to convey the Qur'an. This would help us in studying and understanding the Qur'an.

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5

Revelation

WHAT DOES REVELATION MEAN?

THE QUR'AN IS exclusively the word of God. It does not contain any part or passage authored by any human being or any other form of creation for that matter. The mode and means by which it was conveyed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is called *wahi* or revelation.

Maulana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi writes:

> *"The literal meaning of wahi is 'to direct', 'to write', 'to put a message in one's heart', 'to speak in secret', 'to put something in one's heart'. But in the Islamic terminology, wahi refers to that special divine means by which a prophet receives some knowledge from God (without him having to think or contemplate over it, seek it out, experience or observe it or deduce it from elsewhere)."*
>
> *[Wahi-e-Ilahi, p. 22]*

This tells us that revelation is a mode of divine communication in the form of God's speech. The mode of revelation has been exclusively used to convey God's message to His prophets. This divine message was conveyed by Archangel Gabriel. But after the revelation of the Qur'an upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, this mode of divine communication has been discontinued. After having received such revelation, the prophets were required to

convey it to others verbatim. No prophet was authorised to edit or make any change in the divine revelation whatsoever.

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani writes:

> *"Wahi is the means by which God conveys his words to a person He has chosen for the same. And through this chosen person, the Messenger, God then conveys His words to all mankind. Since the wahi holds the status of being a distinguished channel of communication between God and His servants, and it is only the prophets who experience this, it is impossible for us to properly grasp its reality."* *[Uloomal Qur'an, p. 30]*

THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF A REVELATION

Now that we have had an introduction to revelation, it is important to understand its import. Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi writes:

> *"Revelation is composed of three basic elements. The first thing is that revelation is a direct means of receiving divine knowledge, and this medium is not available to ordinary human beings. This medium is available only to prophets. This means that this is a supernatural means of knowledge.*
>
> *The second important thing about revelation is that it is absolute and definite. It is more absolute and definite that any other thing in this world and it is beyond any shred of doubt or uncertainty. Divine revelation is itself a gold standard. It is a touchstone by which other things are judged for their purity or lack thereof. Divine revelation is itself in no need of any external purity standard.*
>
> *The third basic element about revelation is that acting upon the revelation is incumbent upon the one who receives it and other human beings. After having received such revelation, no person is*

left with the choice of acting independent of it. It is compulsory to follow the directions and commands of the revelation."

[Muhazarat-e-Qur'ani, pp. 49-50]

WHICH HUMAN NEED DOES DIVINE REVELATION FULFIL?

Human needs are unlike those of other living things. It is a distinguishing trait of man that he is much more than his physical and material being; he has a spiritual and moral aspect as well. And it is this spiritual and moral aspect of his personality that actually governs him. Hence, a proper, holistic and complete guidance is required for the development of his spiritual and moral self. Just as man cannot fulfil his physical and material needs on his own, he cannot obtain the guidance necessary for his spiritual and moral aspect on his own either. His helplessness and incompetence in this regard is all too obvious. Instead of benefitting from divine guidance, some naive men leaned back on their own intellect, knowledge and experience. They formulated theories and philosophies, came up with various 'isms', which are all at variance with each other. They are incongruent, completely devoid of balance and equilibrium. The fact remains that God is especially kind to human beings. Although His mercy envelops all forms of creation and they are all His servants, man is His representative and vicegerent on earth, and the most honoured of His creations.

Why would God neglect His most cherished creation and leave him to wander in the dark without fulfilling his most important and fundamental need, especially when there is no one else who can fulfil this requirement of his? While commenting on this need, Maulana Farooq Khan writes:

"God addresses His Prophet by means of revelation and conveys His word to him. He thus establishes a system of human guidance that makes us bow in reverence and gratitude. Revelation is so important to human life that Eddington was compelled to state that: 'The fundamental question is not about His existence; it is about having unflinching conviction in the fact that God guides human beings by means of revelation'."

[Haqeeqat-e-Nubuwwat, p. 34]

Maulana further writes:

"Life becomes meaningless and debased if it is devoid of values. But the question is how can we recognise what these values of life are, and what are those factors which make them worthy of being accepted. It is only by means of revelation that we can know about these values, and it is divine revelation alone that tells us that these values of life are priceless entities. This revelation is directed towards some selected human beings. These men are called prophets or messengers. Einstein had acknowledged the fact that the values of life taught to us by these distinguished men (prophets) stand the test of time. Joad also avers that the intellect is slow to grasp the knowledge of these realities, but the soul recognises them in an instant."

Maulana also says:

"The knowledge we receive from revelation does not clash with our intellect; it rather complements it. But this can only be possible when intellect itself has not been rendered corrupt. It should not have rigid and inflexible preconceived notions. It should, instead, have the humility to embrace the truth with open arms. Revelation only serves to add to our intellect and insight. Revelation does not lead man's intellect astray. Far from it, it actually helps and supports it. Revelation tells us that intellect alone cannot guide

human beings. This is because man requires more than what the intellect can encompass." *[ibid, pp. 34-35]*

Revelation And Intellect

The commonly and widely known sources of human knowledge are the five sense organs, intellect and experience or observation. A disaster of catastrophic proportions befell the human race towards the beginning of the modern era. Not only did scientific advancements turn man away from religion, he also went as far as embracing atheism. This made him rely completely on intellect and experience. He began looking at life and the universe from a purely materialistic perspective. By doing this, he explicitly shunned divine revelation and knowledge of the unseen.

Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi writes:

"In this age, many people are confounded with the question that now that man has reached the zenith of scientific development thanks to his intellectual prowess, by which he has now made the earth subservient to his command and brought the heavens under his dominion, and is conquering space as well,and now that he is naturally endowed with the recognition of good and evil to an extent that he can lead a cultured and sophisticated life and has become the member of a civilised society, and now that he is in possession of such a large treasure of his ancestors' ideas and creeds, their traditions and rules, laws and knowledge that he can build a grand edifice on their foundations, then are these things not sufficient for his life? Does he still stand in need of any revelation?"

[Falsafe Ke Buniyadi Masail, p. 219]

One of the misunderstandings about divine revelation that are found in the minds of modern people is that the five sense

organs cannot encompass revelation. The second thing is that we cannot experience it today. The third is that divine revelation seems implausible.

In order to dispel these misunderstandings, it should first be accepted that man's intellect, experience and observations were essentially limited. They are not free of weaknesses and defects. Man's intellect can and is brought under negative influences, fear and awe. It can and does make wrong judgements. Even when the truth is brought before it, it refuses to accept it under the pretexts of expediencies. Hence, it is not advisable for man to rely totally upon his intellect. The intellect's shortcomings, weaknesses and limitations call out that it too requires something to guide it. This guidance cannot be material; it has to come from the Creator of life. This is because the Creator of the intellect knows best the shortcomings and limitations of the intellect He has bestowed upon us, and how it needs to be guided to save itself from going astray. Human philosophies and science cannot come to the rescue here. It is divine revelation alone that can act as the guide. Divine revelation guides the intellect; it does not counter it. There is no conflict between the intellect and divine revelation.

Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi writes:

> *"It is the Lord who has granted the intellect, and it is the same Lord who has granted revelation as well. How then can there be any conflict or inconsistency between them? It is illogical and unnatural for there to be any conflict or inconsistency between them. The truth remains that this is a requirement of the intellect that revelation has beautifully fulfilled. Thus, they perfectly complement each other."* *[ibid, p. 226]*

Maulana further explains:

"Revelation hones the intellect. This means that revelation makes a man capable enough to see to it that his intellect does not wander away in those premises where man has been left to the mercy of his intellect.

Revelation completes the intellect. This means that since intellect is the distinguishing trait of human beings and its most defining feature, it does knock on the doors of all the higher truths, but it is not within its power to open up those doors and acquaint itself with its secrets. Revelation opens up those doors and allows man to see the wonders within.

Revelation completes the light of man's instinct. This means that the light that resides within man's nature is made resplendent with the light of revelation, to the point that its light brightens up the horizons.

Revelation provides a conclusive argument against man. God Almighty could might as well had held man accountable on the Day of Judgement and rewarded him with awards or punishments on the basis of the intellect He has given him and the light of instinct He has blessed him with. But He did not find it appropriate to punish man on this sole basis. Hence, along with the light of intellect and instinct, He sent the light of revelation through His messengers and divine guidance. By doing so, He has provided a conclusive argument by which the sinner can be brought to book on the Day of Judgement, and every person can be held accountable for every small or big deed that he has done.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an tells us that God has given man an intellect so that he might become a thinking and reasoning person. He has given him the light of nature and instinct so that he might become a cultured and civilised person, that he might differentiate between good and bad and not become just any other animal. Next, He has given him knowledge by means of revelation and divine books and made good distinct from bad and right distinct from wrong, so that he is left with no excuse to tread an unrighteous path. Intellect and

revelation both have a common source. Hence, there is no conflict between the two. On the contrary, there is complete coherence between the twain. Owing to the limitations of the intellect, it is necessary for man to walk under the light of revelation and allow it to groom him." *[ibid, pp. 228-233]*

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE QUR'AN?

In order to properly understand the Qur'an, it is necessary to understand its central theme. It is commonly held that the central theme of the Qur'an is either Islam or Muslims. But the truth of the matter is that the central theme of the Qur'an is 'man'. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi presents the following question to elucidate this important point:

"What kind of a book is the Qur'an? What is the nature of its revelation and compilation? What is the subject of its discourse? What is the central point of all its discussion? Around which central theme do all its various topics revolve? What is the line of debate and argument that it has employed to present its case?
He who seeks the commonly recognised book pattern in the Qur'an, and wanders about in the pages of this book when he does not find it, does so because he is unaware of the elements of Qur'anic study. He begins his study under the impression that he is about to read a book on religion. The concepts of 'religious topic' and 'book' that he has in his mind are the same that are routinely found in the minds of common folks. But when he comes across something very different from his idea of 'religious topic', he finds it difficult to relate to it. Unable to recognise the central theme, he begins to wander among its pages like a stranger does in uncharted territory, lost in its lanes. He would be saved this ordeal if he is explained before and that the book you are going to read is a one-of-its-kind piece of literature. It has been compiled in a manner which is at

variance with all the books found on the face of this earth. It is unique as far as its subject, topic and pattern of compilation are concerned. Thus, the idea of a book that you have developed in your mind after reading all the books you have read as yet would not be of any help to you in studying this book. It would, on the contrary, create hurdles. If you wish to understand this book, clear your mind of all preconceived notions and embrace its unique pattern."

[Tafheemal Qur'an, Vol 1]

Maulana further writes:

"The subject of this book is man. It tells us what really constitutes his success and failure. Its central theme revolves around the ideas man has conceived about God, the system of this universe and his own self and life on the basis of what is apparent, his vague assumptions and his vain desires, and the attitude he has adopted on the basis of these ideas. It then goes on to explain that these fabricated ideas and attitudes are factually wrong, and have disastrous consequences in store for man himself. The truth is what God had told man when He had appointed him His vicegerent. This book seeks to call man towards the right attitude and present divine guidance before him in the most perspicuous manner, something that man has been repeatedly losing because of his neglect and his evil self has always been corrupting." *[ibid]*

Accordingly, the Qur'an discusses the creation of man and the creation of this universe. Likewise, it also mentions certain scientific and historical facts. It discusses economics, sociology, politics, culture and civilisation, civics, law and jurisprudence, philosophy and supernatural issues. But despite this, none of these is the subject matter of the Qur'an. All these subjects have been discussed here because they are related to the central theme of the Qur'an; they all revolve around it. Hence, it is futile to seek the literary pattern,which is found in other books, in the

Qur'an. Keeping this unique factor of the Qur'an in mind would help us in studying the Qur'an better. It is important to remember that the Qur'an was not revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ all at once; it was gradually revealed little by little over a period of 23 years. We shall now discuss its compilation and extraordinary preservation in the pages that follow. But before that, let us acquaint ourselves with some defining features of the Qur'an, so that it becomes easier to study it and gain from the truth and realities contained therein.

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6

Some Defining Features of the Qur'an

THE QUR'AN HAS BEEN REVEALED BY GOD

In order to completely and properly benefit from the Qur'an, it is important to clearly understand its true status. Ponder over the arguments presented here and decide for your own self whether the Qur'an has been authored by God or someone else.

Barring a small minority, the overwhelming population of human beings has always acknowledged the existence of God. It is a historical fact that God has sent messengers and has sent them divine books. We come to know from irrefutable historical sources that messengers belonging to various communities have been receiving scriptures and books from God.

The previous books and scriptures revealed by God which predate the Qur'an could not be retained in their original form thanks to interpolations and corruptions by human beings. Also, the actual text is no longer available. This made it impossible for man to obtain guidance from these books, which was, in fact, the primary purpose of those books. Man's need for divine guidance remained unquenched. Hence, for the last time, God has sent down that guidance in its complete form for the benefit of all mankind. Unprecedented steps were taken to

preserve it. The Qur'an now exists as the last and final link in the series of books and scriptures revealed by God for the guidance of all human beings. Now if we believe that God exists, and that He fulfils man's moral and spiritual needs just as He fulfils his physical and material ones, then how can we deny the Qur'an? The messengers presented God's books before the people and even personally demonstrated how it should be implemented. The last of these messengers is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the final message that was revealed to him is the Holy Qur'an. There remains no doubt then that the Qur'an is the word of God.

The other aspect of this argument that is as important is the testimony the Qur'an presents about itself. Is it the first book in the history of mankind to have been revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ? The Qur'an tells us that it is not so; God has been guiding mankind using this method right from the beginning of the human race on earth. The Qur'an claims to present the message and guidance contained in the books and scriptures revealed upon the previous prophets anew, that it does not present an altogether new message or guidance. This means that we need to acknowledge all the books that form this chain of divine guidance from the first book to the last (the last being the Holy Qur'an). Rejecting any one of them is the same as rejecting them all. Hence, we would have to accept that the Qur'an is indeed the word of God, and that it is the last of this series of divine books of guidance.

Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maududi explains this point when he says:

> *"During the 40 years before being appointed a messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not receive any such education or instruction which would teach him those things which he suddenly began to*

utter on being conferred with prophethood. Never before was he seen taking interest in those issues, discussing those matters or having an opinion on those topics which were now being taken up by the Qur'an one after another. Why, during his entire life of 40 years, even his close friends and relatives did not notice any such thing in his speech or actions which could be seen as a precursor to this grand movement that he suddenly initiated at the age of 40 years. This itself was clear evidence of the fact that the Qur'an was not a product of his own mind, but an external entity that he had received." *[Seerat Sarwar-e- Alam, Vol 1, p. 94]*

Look at it from another aspect. The sun, the moon, the air, water, forests and mountains and all such things play an essential role in the existence, protection and survival of the human species. It was beyond the capacity of man to create them and make them beneficial for himself. God has been immensely graceful and kind to have gifted us these priceless things without having to ask for them. Making use of the intellect, wisdom and foresight granted by God, man could harness these gifts to his benefit. He discovered their properties and made several scientific advancements to keep them under his control.

The greatest gift God has bestowed upon us is the gift of guidance. It is the most important thing a person can ever require. Just as man is not the creator of the sun, the moon, the air, warmth or water, he is also incapable of conceiving this guidance. Just as we could not have come up with a system better than the one we have been given for the existence, protection, survival and development of the human race, guidance can also emanate from God Almighty and nobody else. Accordingly, He set up this system through the agency of prophets and the books that He bestowed upon them. There can be no system better or more complete than this. This system

would have remained incomplete if only prophets would have been sent without books or books would have been sent without prophets. Both were equally required. It did not behove His mercy and benevolence and justice and wisdom to make man His representative and vicegerent, give him freedom and authority (to test him) on earth, grant him the best of provisions, then make him appear before Him after allowing him to spend some years of life on earth and call him to account and decide upon his eternal fate, but deprive him of the guidance which would allow him to make preparations in this world for the hereafter. It goes without saying that God Almighty is gracious and merciful, just and infinitely wise. It is inconceivable that He would make no arrangement to show man the correct path. Hence, He began sending prophets and divine books. No prophet ever claimed to be the author of the book he was presenting. Rather, every prophet attributed the book to God. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last of this series and it is a fact that the Qur'an was revealed to him.

The Jews and Christians regard the Torah to be a divinely revealed book, but do not believe the Qur'an to be so. The Christians even believe the Gospel to be the word of God, but do not have the same belief when it comes to the Qur'an. The Muslims, on the other hand, regard all these books- the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an- to be divinely revealed books. They also believe that the original texts of the Torah and the Gospel no longer exist in this world; all that remain are translations. There has been so much corruption in these translations that they do not deserve to be called the preserved word of God. Moreover, the word of God is a source of guidance for humankind. It shows the path to success in this world and salvation in the afterlife. These objectives cannot be fulfilled by

these now-corrupted books. The Qur'an is the only book which fulfils these objectives.

This point has been further explained by Maulana Maududi. He writes:

> *"This message that has been revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is indeed the word of God. Four things have been presented to testify to this truth:*
> *The first thing is that this Book is full of goodness and blessings, which means that it contains pristine principles for man's success and prosperity. It teaches us the correct creed, encourages us to be good, directs us towards the pinnacle of virtue and guides us towards a chaste life. Moreover, it is absolutely free of the ignorance, selfishness, short sightedness, injustice, vulgarity and all the other filth that you have filled other holy books with.*
> *The second thing is that this Book does not present a new message which is at variance with the messages that had been revealed before this. On the contrary, it confirms and ratifies whatever had been presented in those books.*
> *The third thing is that this Book has been revealed to achieve the same purpose that all the previous divine books sought to achieve, viz. to warn the people immersed in ignorance about the sorry consequences of their evil deeds that they would have to face in the hereafter.*
> *The fourth thing is that this Book did not impress those people who are given to revel in worldly pleasures and vanities. Instead, it appealed to those people whose vision goes beyond the constraints of this world. The biggest sign of the ensuing revolution this Book brought about in their lives is that such people are distinguished among fellow human beings as the most pious men of their society.*
> *Can these defining features and this outcome be expected from a book authored by a mortal? Can it be the work of a lying fabricator*

who commits the gravest of sins by attributing his work to God with all impudence?" *[Tafheemul Qur'an, Vol 1]*

Now let us see what the Qur'an has to say about itself. Kindly ponder over the following ayaat of the Qur'an:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٢

"This book has indeed been revealed by the Lord of the worlds." *[Al-Sajdah 32: 2]*

تَنْزِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ وَالسَّمٰوٰتِ الْعُلٰى ۝٤

"(The Qur'an)is a revelation from Him who created the earth and the highest heavens." *[Taha 20: 4]*

وَاِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْاٰنَ مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ۝٦

"And indeed (O Prophet!), you receive the Qur'an from one who is Wise and Knowing." *[Al-Naml 27: 6]*

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ۭ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا ۝٨٢

"Do they not reflect over the Qur'an? If it had been from anyone other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy." *[Al-Nisa' 4: 82]*

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝١٩٢

"And indeed it (the Qur'an) is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds." *[Ash-Shur'ara 26: 192]*

The Qur'an has repeatedly emphasised upon the fact that it has been revealed by God Almighty. In order to substantiate this claim, the Qur'an throws a challenge that has yet to be answered

by anyone, and cannot be answered by anyone in the future either.

God says:

قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِمِثْلِ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ بِمِثْلِهٖ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

"Say, 'If the whole of mankind and jinn were to come together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would not be able to produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support." *[Bani Israil 17: 88]*

The same challenge has been repeated in Surah atTur:ayaat 33 and 34 where those who accuse the Prophet of fabrication are asked to produce a recital like unto it to prove their allegation. After some years, the challenge was diluted to mere ten surahs. Finally, in the 37th and 38thayaat of Surah Yunus, the challenge was further mellowed down to a single surah, and the accusers of fabrication were asked to call anyone they could find other than God to their aid.

When the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madinah with his companions, this challenge was repeated in Madinah as well.

وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا فَاْتُوْا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهٖ ۖ وَادْعُوْا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

"And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a Surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than God if you should be truthful."

[Al-Baqarah 2: 23]

This challenge could not be answered by the greatest of poets and men of literature from Makkah or all of Arabia. And

this challenge stands to this day, and till the end of time. Think over it! In order to prove that the Qur'an is not the word of God, all that the dissenters need to do is produce a small Surah like the ones contained in the Qur'an and thus reply to the open challenge put up by the Qur'an. But there is not a single soul who has succeeded in this challenge to date. And it is most unlikely that anyone in the future would succeed in this challenge either.

The diversity of its contents, their wide implications and versatility also point towards the fact that the Qur'an can only have been authored by God Almighty. Dr. Muhammad Raziul Islam Nadvi writes:

> *"The topics discussed in the Qur'an are so vast that it is impossible for any human being to encompass them all. This is also proof of the fact that man cannot be its author. Why was this universe created? What is the status of man? What is the right attitude expected of him? Is he the undisputed master of his desires, ambitions and actions, or is he accountable before someone else? And if he is, then before whom is he accountable? Clear and detailed answers to these questions have been given in the Qur'an. It has been mentioned that this universe has been created by a Higher Entity in a planned manner. Man has been sent to this world to test him, to see whether he follows the straight path shown by his Lord and Master or follows deviant paths. What is this straight path? And which are those deviant paths? All this has also been expounded. The various natural phenomena, man's own body and the entire human history have been cited as arguments to substantiate the same. This book also explains how man deviated from the straight path in the past and what were the means used to guide him back to the straight path. Similarly, it also delves in detail about the effects and consequences faced by those who walk*

on the straight path and those who walk on deviant paths. Likewise, it also informs us what would befall them when this world comes to an end and another world comes into existence. The Qur'an discusses these topics, and many other such topics, in a very clear and definite manner. The points presented here are not based on some speculation, vague logic or conjecture; rather, it seems very obvious that the One who is presenting them has definite knowledge of these things. He knows what has happened in the past and the future is also clear to him."

[Haqaiq-e-Islam: Baaz Aitrazat Ka Jawab, pp. 39-40]

Presenting one more argument to prove this point, Dr. Raziul Islam writes:

"The information that the Qur'an had provided about natural phenomena fourteen centuries back is getting demystified and increasingly clear with the advancements in science and knowledge. The collective knowledge of humankind in that age was far too less to properly understand those realities. The information regarding the creation of the heavens and the earth, the structure and formation of mountains and the details of precipitation and embryology contained in the Qur'an could not be presented by any human being of the 6th Century in such fine detail and precision. These pieces of information testify to the fact that they are being presented by the One who has complete knowledge of these realities and whose knowledge transcends the boundaries of time and space.

[ibid, p. 41]

THE QUR'AN IS MEANT FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS

The Qur'an is a guidebook for the entire mankind. This is a fact; not a mere claim, but an established fact.

God has made a wonderful arrangement to fulfil the material, natural and physical needs of human beings and made it easily accessible for one and all. His sun, moon, air, water, earth, sky, day and night are equally meant for each of them. No particular class of men or nation or community or race has any exclusive claim over these elements which are vital to the protection and survival of every human being. No man can ever say that he does not need them or that he has nothing to do with them. While using these bounties of nature, man does not see whether anyone else is using them or not; he does not say that since others are making use of them I will not. It would be suicidal of him to stop using them just because someone else is also using them.

In the same way, God has made a wonderful arrangement to fulfil man's moral and spiritual needs. This bounty, too, has been made equally accessible for all. This arrangement is made up of divine revelation, prophets and books of guidance. The last of this series of prophets is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the last of this series of books is the Holy Qur'an. This entire arrangement has been made universal for all human beings, irrespective of their race, colour, nationality and language. In fact, this arrangement fulfils the most important and fundamental of all human needs. No particular individual or group or family or community or race has any exclusive claim over divine guidance. No person can say that I do not stand in need of divine guidance. For, that would only mean that he has is not in the least concerned about his success, peace, security, development and progress in this world. And not only this, it would also mean that he does not care about his salvation in the afterlife or about saving himself from eternal perdition. When you study the Qur'an, you would understand this reality in much more detail. The guidance and teachings of the Qur'an

completely fulfil this essential need. You can also say that the Qur'an is a divine *manual* for every human being that has been granted to him by his Creator.

Whatever has been said above has made it amply clear that the Qur'an is meant for all. This is why the Qur'an addresses all human beings without exception. It has been mentioned earlier that the Qur'an is not in conflict with the previously revealed books; rather, it presents the actual teachings and guidance of those corrupted and doctored books in their complete and preserved form. This means that the Qur'an establishes its relation with the believers and followers of the previously revealed divine books as well. It recapitulates the teachings of those books which have long been lost.

See how the Qur'an addresses us:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ ٱلۡكَرِيمِ ۝٦

"O men, what has deceived you concerning your Generous Lord?"

[Al-Infitar 82: 6]

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱعۡبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَكُمۡ

"O men, worship your Lord who has created you.

[Al-Baqarah 2: 21]

تَبَارَكَ ٱلَّذِي نَزَّلَ ٱلۡفُرۡقَانَ عَلَىٰ عَبۡدِهِۦ لِيَكُونَ لِلۡعَٰلَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ۝١

"Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His servant (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) that he may be a warner to the worlds."

[Al-Furqan 25: 1]

One important aspect of this argument is that the guidance, message and teachings of the Qur'an are in complete accordance with man's innate nature and needs. In other words, no part of the Qur'an is incoherent with human nature. The

Qur'an is an answer to his natural desires. If his nature has not been rendered corrupt, he would appreciate this fact when he reads the Qur'an. By rejecting the calls of his innate nature, man not only deprives himself of a bounty as precious as truth, he also walks into the trap laid down by his sworn enemy, the Satan, and turns wayward.

Maulana Sadruddin Islahi writes:

> *"Qur'anic teachings have a universal and international appeal. They cannot be identified by the specific need of any particular era or the community needs of any particular nation per se. They do not cater to any particular race or nation; they cater to human beings and human nature. This is the reason why they apply to people of every era, every nation, every race and every corner of the world. This is the distinguishing feature of the Qur'an which has allowed it to call its proposed system the innate or natural system (deen fitrat)."* *[Qur'an Majeed KaTa'aruf, p. 43]*

THE QUR'AN THE PRESERVED WORD OF GOD

The Qur'an is the last and final message of God to all mankind. This is because it has been revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who happens to be the last among the prophets. Prophet Muhammad has been prophesised in many a religious scripture. The book revealed upon the last messenger is naturally the last book to be revealed. Even a cursory study of the previous books and prophets would tell you that most of their teachings were specific to their age and region. Had this not been the case, and had they been present with us in their original form, they could have proved beneficial for the guidance of all human beings even today. But those books have been corrupted, doctored and insulted with human interpolation to such an extent that the original divine message

has been completely lost. Not only this, the biographies of the prophets on whom these books had been revealed could not remain preserved either. What this essentially means is that those books were meant for *that* specific age and people only. Now let us see how the Qur'an has been preserved.

Maulana SadruddinIslahi explains thus:

> *When we say that a divine book is preserved, it means that the text has exactly the same original words revealed by God Almighty.*
> *The arrangements of those words, the resultant sentences and their sequence should also be the same as that conveyed by the messenger upon whom that book was revealed.*
> *Not a single word from the original text should be lost. Neither should it be deleted, nor should it be replaced by another word.*
> *It should not have any extra word(s), not even that of the messenger who has brought that book.*
> *The book would not be regarded as preserved even if a single condition is not met.* *[Qur'an Majeed Ka Ta'aruf, pp. 71-72]*

Extraordinary and unmatched steps have been taken to preserve the Qur'an. We do not find anything close to it in the history of mankind. The compilation of the Qur'an was completed during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The role of his companions (the Sahaba) has also been exemplary in this regard. Allow me to present a few fundamental points:

We have sound documented evidence on the memorisation and textual compilation of the Qur'an. These are not some conjectures or folklore, but undeniable historical facts. They are not stories that come from some good faith. It can be claimed with all conviction that the copy of the Qur'an that you obtain from any book seller or library is the very same book that was

revealed a millennium and a half ago upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The original text of the Qur'an is secure and preserved. The Arabic language in which the Qur'an was revealed is still a living language having international status. The arrangements made by Prophet Muhammad and his companions to ensure the preservation of the original text of the Qur'an would be discussed in the following pages.

Pick up a copy of the Qur'an from any village in the world. Then, take another copy of the Qur'an from a big city located in another corner of the world. Compare them both. They would both be the same. There would be no difference in the text. In other words, there is only one version of the Qur'an in the entire world, and it is accepted by all. No Muslim organisation or sect or school of thought has its own separate Qur'an which only they accept exclusive of everyone else. The Prophet reduced it to writing right from the initial days. The revelation was written down as soon as the words were revealed. Forty two companions were commissioned as scribes for this task. The names of all these 42 companions have been recorded. A scribe was called and the revelation dictated to him the moment the Prophet received any revelation- irrespective of whether the latter was at home or on a journey. Scribes used to accompany him in almost all his journeys. And he did not suffice at having it written down either; he used to listen to it to confirm or correct the text as the case may be. It was only after he was satisfied of the exactness of the written text that it was announced to the public.

The record of the words and deeds of the Prophet is called Hadith. The compilation of the Qur'an in written form had been completed in the lifetime of the Prophet. The writing materials

of that age were stone slabs, the scapula of camels, large pieces of leather, barks of palm trees, large leaves and paper. There were quite a few companions who kept personal copies of the Qur'an and used to refer to them during recitation.

One more seemingly unconventional method of preserving the Qur'an was to memorise it. The Arabs were known for their sharp memory. They could even remember the lineage of their horses and camels. They could easily remember epics spread over hundreds and thousands of stanzas and recite them from memory. The companions had a special interest in memorising the Qur'an. Since a part of the Qur'an is always recited during the daily prayers, it was anyway required to memorise its passages. This made it easier for them to memorise extensive parts of the Qur'an. And there were many companions who had memorised the entire Qur'an as well. A little more than 80 companions used to stay on the porch of Masjid Nabvi. They kept themselves busy in learning the Qur'an and teaching it to others. It is recorded in history that scholars among the companions who had memorised the Qur'an were sent as teachers and guides to those surrounding townships of Madinah where people had recently accepted Islam. The number of companions in such delegations used to go up to 70. Seven hundred companions who had memorised the entire Qur'an were martyred in a single battle (Battle of Yamamah).

During the reign of Caliph Abu Bakr (the first Caliph), the official copy of the Qur'an was compiled in a single book. Seven copies of this official copy were made by Caliph Usman (the third Caliph) and sent to the important cities of the Islamic Caliphate of that era. Four of these seven copies can still be found at Tashkent, Istanbul, Damascus and Cairo.

In short, no extra word has been added to or subtracted from the original text of the Qur'an. The Qur'an present with us is the exact replica of the one revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

One more way in which the Qur'an has been preserved is that its entire text is recited in the month of Ramazan during the Taraweeh prayers. Even in small towns and villages, we have a person who has memorised the entire Qur'an read out the Qur'an to the devotees during these prayers, such that the entire recitation is completed by the 27th or 29th night of Ramazan.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes:

> *"The Qur'an is preserved, while the other books are not preserved in their original form. This is the distinguishing aspect of the Qur'an. Hence, it remains the only book that can be followed and the only means to salvation till the end of time."*
>
> *[Azmat-e-Qur'an Majeed, pp. 5-6]*

THE QUR'AN IS FREE OF MUTUALLY CONTRADICTORY AND INCOHERENT PASSAGES

No divine scripture can be expected to have mutually contradictory and incoherent passages. If it indeed is the word of God, then man's success and salvation lies hinged upon it. Any existence of discrepancy points towards human interpolation. If there happens to be a contradiction concerning such important and fundamental topics like success and salvation, then it would become difficult for man to decide what he should accept and what he should avoid from among those mutually contradictory passages. And what would be the criterion or determining factor in doing so? Who would be authorised to determine this criterion? If there are two or more

mutually contradictory statements, then both of them cannot be true at one and the same time; only one of them can ever be true. Hence, it is very important for religious scriptures to remain free of contradictions, lest divine guidance is rendered vague and ambiguous. Man cannot obtain guidance from doctored scriptures. He would, on the contrary, lose his way. Respecting religious scriptures is one thing, but it is important for every person to seek the truth.

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it is free of contradictions from the first page to the last. It has already been mentioned that the Qur'an was revealed during a span of 23 years. Despite this span of a quarter of a century, there is no incoherence between the message revealed in the earliest years and the message revealed any time later. Moreover, not even a single statement of the Qur'an has been proved wrong to this day. Such faults are often seen in human literature. It is the common practice of authors to make amends in later editions of their work. The Qur'an, however, is free of any such fault. For instance, the most important of its teachings revolves around monotheism. Polytheism has been vehemently refuted. The Qur'an speaks about the ill-effects of polytheism and presents unmatched arguments in favour of monotheism from the start to the end. But you would not find a single ayat in the Qur'an that even remotely inclines towards polytheism or deviates from monotheism. This is but one example. Prophethood and the hereafter are also core elements of the Islamic creed, and the same coherent pattern can be found while discussing these topics are well. There is absolutely no inconsistency or incongruity in the teachings of the Qur'an; they are all in perfect harmony with each other. The Qur'an presents its message, principles and teachings in explicit and unambiguous detail. It then offers clear arguments in support of its proposition and

leaves it to the people to accept or reject it. It does, however, inform them of the consequences of its rejection in this world and the hereafter.

The Qur'an says:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

"Do they not ponder over the Qur'an? If at all it had been from any one other than God, they would have found therein much contradiction." *[Al-Nisa' 4: 82]*

THE QUR'AN HAS NOT BEEN AUTHORED BY PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

Arguments have been presented above to prove that the Qur'an is the word of God and His message. No man or group of men can ever come up with anything similar to the Qur'an even if they were to assist each other in this futile endeavour. Let alone the entire Qur'an, even the challenge to come up with a single Surah remains unanswered for a millennium and a half. Now that it has been proved that the Qur'an is indeed the word of God, it naturally follows that it cannot be the handiwork of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Prophet has never claimed to be the author of the Qur'an; he has always presented it as the word of God. He had spent 40 years of his life in Makkah among its citizens before being appointed a prophet. The people of Makkah knew very well that he had never had the opportunity of learning anything from any teacher. As such, he had never spoken on these topics all those 40 years. Then suddenly at the age of 40, when God's message began getting revealed upon him, he told the people that he was a prophet and these are the

messages I have received. The life of previous prophets and the events surrounding their respective communities have been narrated in the Qur'an. It also mentions certain scientific facts that have only recently been discovered by man. What, pray, was the source of all this scientific information available with Prophet Muhammad in the 7th Century CE? It is but obvious that it was impossible for any human being of that period to state those facts. Moreover, Makkah was a desert town, far removed from the centres of learning and civilisation, not to mention that the knowledge level of that period was far too low in any case.

The Qur'an has repeatedly challenged those men who accused Prophet Muhammad of having authored this book to come up with a similar book themselves. But as we have mentioned earlier, this challenge still remains unanswered.

Prophet Muhammad was so honest and upright that even his enemies testified to the fact that they had not met anyone as honest and upright as him. Why, they even used to deposit their belongings with him for safe keeping. How can such a person be expected to lie in the name of God and falsely attribute his own writings to Him?

THE QUR'AN CONFIRMS THE PREVIOUS SCRIPTURES

Right from day one, God made arrangements to guide mankind by means of prophets and messengers and books and scriptures. Messengers and scriptures have been sent to people of various communities all throughout history. All those books and scriptures had the distinction of being the word of God. No difference was ever found in their fundamental teachings. But

with the passage of time, human interference and interpolations obscured the original teachings contained in those books. It became difficult to pick out the truth from the medley of falsehood. They began to point towards different paths. Differences and discrepancies began to erupt even in fundamental concepts like the idea of God, His attributes, life after death etc. This shows that although they might have been pure divine revelations when they had actually been revealed, they have lost this position of theirs owing to later corruptions.

It was essential for human beings not to remain deprived of divine guidance. It was essential to acquaint him with those principles and teachings which he could easily follow and make use of to derive solutions to the ever-exfoliating problems plaguing human life. This divine guidance should be for all human beings, well-preserved and universal in nature. The Qur'an fulfils all these conditions. The series of divine guidance that had begun thousands of years ago has now been completed with the revelation of this universal book. Hence, we would have faith in the previously revealed books and attest to the fact that they had indeed been revealed. The Qur'an itself states that it does not refute the previously revealed scriptures; rather, it confirms that they were indeed sources of divine guidance. It thus creates a relation with them all.

The Qur'an has preserved all the elements of truth contained in the previous scriptures. Hence, accepting the Qur'an is as good as accepting all those scriptures, and rejecting the Qur'an is as good as rejecting them all. This is because all these books and scriptures owe their source to God Almighty.

Maulana Sadruddin Islahi writes:

"None of the scriptures sent by God in this world refuted the other. And since the Qur'an also belongs to the same family, the same can be expected from it as well. It is indeed in accordance and harmony with all the previously revealed scriptures, not their opponent or challenger. It too was revealed for the exact same purpose that the other books were revealed. Its basic teachings and concepts are the same as were those of the previous books of guidance. Hence, its relation with those books is that of concurrence, not contradiction. The books that are today claimed to have been divinely revealed differ from the Qur'an with respect to their basic teachings and concepts. But this does not mean that those books are indeed divine revelations and the message contained therein today is the same divinely revealed original message. It could either be that these books are not divinely revealed at all, or that their original teachings have been obscured by the neglect, ingratitude and corruption committed by their purported acolytes. For, it is not at all plausible that God would send down a book of guidance that does not concur with the basic teachings of the Qur'an."

[Qur'an Majeed Ka Ta'aruf, pp. 41-42]

THE QUR'AN ASKS US TO PONDER OVER IT

Even today, the general perception about religion is that logic and reasoning should have no role to play here. Faith is paramount. Do not ask questions. It would weaken your faith. Religious ideas need to be blindly accepted and its teachings should be followed with unwavering devotion. When we talk of religion today, it usually refers to its rites and customs, nothing more than some traditional rituals performed by one's ancestors. It is believed that intellect and reasoning, contemplation and logic, wisdom and pragmatism have got nothing to do with religion; simply following one's ancestral tradition is sufficient.

But the Qur'an repeatedly calls upon people to think and ponder over it. Man holds a rank of distinction among all forms of creation because he is blessed with intellect and reason. He can distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. It was necessary to equip such an intelligent being with some amount of liberty and authority. Hence, God granted these too. However, the Qur'an issued a caution that man would deviate from the straight path if he falls back upon his intellect alone. We have many examples- granting state sanction to homosexuality, live-in relationships and extra-marital relations and justifying it in the name of individual freedom, making no distinction between men and women and promoting an artificial sense of gender equality etc. It is because of these imbalances that morality and modesty no longer exist. Families have been disrupted and the family system itself is getting extinct. We have the spine-chilling examples of so many countries before us!

Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi writes:

> *"One very important thing that the Qur'an has offered us is the balance and harmony between intellect and revelation and religion and knowledge. This is something that cannot be found anywhere except the Qur'an and the Shariah (law) presented by the Qur'an. The world knows not the balance that would liberate human life from this clash and conflict between religion and reason that has been going on since millennia. There have been some religions in history which held on to revelation and spirituality, but this was done at the cost of reason and logic. Such religions went on to become a collection of all forms of unintelligent elements. As an antithesis, the modern era committed itself to logic and wisdom. In its misplaced enthusiasm, it expelled religion from all walks of life.*

As a result, human life is fast getting depleted of all forms of moral and spiritual values.

The Qur'an is the only book which granted an appropriate and effective status to the intellect in purely religious matters and to the religious teachings in purely worldly affairs. The emphasis on intellect and reasoning and knowledge and wisdom that has been laid in this book has not been laid in any other religious book."

[Muhazerat-e-Qur'ani, pp. 20-21]

The Qur'an calls upon every human being to contemplate over his own self and the entire universe, so that he might recognise the truth and profess faith in his Creator.

Renowned scholar, A. K. Brohi writes:

"The Holy Qur'an keeps encouraging us to think and ponder. It would not be an exaggeration to state that this book has led us to the technique by which man can study the book of nature and recognise God's signs in his self. The entire universe is a whole, and man has been commanded to observe it closely and learn from it. We are being asked to observe God's creation and see if we can find any fault therein. It then commands us to study the changes in nature, which contain signs of our Lord. For example, see how the day and night seem to chase each other, how the dry earth springs back to life with the first showers of rain, how the weather changes and how the moon and sun swim about in their respective orbits. In the 3rd and 4th ayaat of its 13th Surah, the Qur'an says that there are many signs in nature for those who contemplate. It is God Almighty who has spread out the earth, set firm mountains over it and let rivers flow and created everything in pairs. On the same field, we have grapevines and crops and date palms, all irrigated by the same water. Indeed, there are great signs in these for those who understand."

[Tareekh-e-Insaniyat Par Qur'an Kareem Ke Asraat, pp. 11-12]

THE QUR'AN IS A BOOK OF GUIDANCE

Man's list of essential requirements includes food, housing, healthcare and education. But there is one more thing that every person requires. The most important thing that a person requires is guidance. Whatever has been mentioned in the first sentence is required to sustain human life. But it is guidance that tells us how this life is to be properly led. Guidance makes man a pious servant of his Lord. It fosters the essence of humanity among human beings. Without guidance, he would be left deprived of humanity, morality and spirituality, and get reduced to a biped animal.

What does guidance imply? Can man fulfil this need all by himself? The fact remains that man has time and again tried to do so using his intellect, experiences and his knowledge of history, but he has failed miserably on every such occasion.

Guidance does not refer to the acceptance of some lifeless doctrines or blindly following one's ancestral customs, family tradition or the lame example of one's forefathers. Guidance covers a man's individual and collective life. No aspect of his life falls beyond its ambit. Divine guidance does not compartmentalise human life. It treats life as a single entity. Divine guidance brings all aspects of human life under its all-encompassing wing and nurtures it. It provides nourishment for its development and beautifies it, completes it.

Maulana Sadruddin Islahi writes:

> *"The Qur'an is a holistic book of guidance in all respects. It is a system, a law, an ideology and lifestyle which contains guidelines for each and every aspect of human life- doctrinal and practical, apparent and hidden, individual and collective, national and international. No other book has claim to this distinction."*

[Qur'an Majeed Ka Ta'aruf, p. 43]

A. K. Brohi writes:

> *"In its position of being a book of guidance, the Qur'an has clarified and explained the entire concept and all the implications of guidance. Guidance means showing the way. The first three ayaat of Surah alAala shed light on all the related aspects of development and progress which every form of creation need to traverse: Glorify the name of your Lord most High, He who has created all things and then proportioned them, and then measured them and guided them."*
>
> *When it comes to human beings, the intellect God has given man also comes under the purview of guidance. Intellect is a skill that keeps a tab on his inner beast and prevents it from crossing its limits. Intellect is undoubtedly a great gift, but it is not entirely sufficient. Intellect has a very limited scope. It would be dangerous for it to trespass its limits. Hence, this is the only form of guidance that the prophets conveyed from God. This guidance manifests in the form of prophetic commands. If a person does not follow them, he would keep clashing with nature. Not only this, he would also remain in conflict with his own inner self. After complying with this guidance, man can step out of the restricted premises of his intellect. It is by means of this guidance that man can envisage his entire destiny."*
>
> *[Tareekh-e-Insaniyat Par Qur'an Kareem Ke Asraat, pp. 5-6]*

THE QUR'AN IS THE LAST AND FINAL BOOK SENT BY GOD

The Qur'an has been revealed upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who happens to be the last and final messenger of God. This implies that the book revealed upon him should also be the last and final divinely revealed book. The chain of prophets that had

begun with Prophet Adam concluded with Prophet Muhammad. The teachings and biographies of the prophets preceding Prophet Muhammad are not present today in their original form; they have all been corrupted. But the life of the Prophet before and after him being commissioned a prophet is preserved with us. His message and teachings have also been preserved. Moreover, he initiated a great revolution on the basis of this divine guidance- first in Arabia, and then the entire world. He revolutionised people, families, society and the establishment. Hence, we no longer require any new prophet or any new scripture. It thus follows that the Holy Qur'an is the last and final book of guidance for all humanity.

Consider one more aspect. The central theme of the Qur'an is man, his success and salvation. The weaknesses and faults of 7th century man were the same as they are today. Even henceforth, till the last man breathes on earth, there would definitely be a change in his surroundings and means and resources (i.e. they would become more advanced), but *man* would essentially remain the same. Hence, the guidance presented by the Qur'an is as fresh today as it was fifteen centuries ago.

The principles and teachings of the Qur'an should suffice him till the end of time. And this is not a hollow claim. Think over it.Until recently people used to say that trade, banking and insurance cannot be run without interest. But the Qur'an had told us that interest is a forbidden entity, the end result of which is loss, economic exploitation and financial collapse. Today, the World Bank and IMF reports suggest that the Qur'anic claim was indeed true. The Qur'an has also forbidden gambling, alcohol, extra-marital relationships, homosexual relations and

other such evils. Following its guidance is imperative for the success and prosperity of all human beings till the last day.

There is no doubt about the fact that the world would keep changing. New and unforeseen issues would keep coming up. The teachings of the Qur'an and guidance of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ can be used in every age to draw out solutions to contemporary issues. The best part about the Qur'an is that it is preserved, and so are the teachings of the prophet who conveyed it to us. This guidance is equally applicable for all human beings; no particular nation or community has exclusive rights over it.

In the presence of such a robust system, there is no human requirement left for any new scripture to fulfil.

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN AND ITS TEACHINGS ARE UNIVERSAL

When you study the Qur'an, you would readily appreciate the fact that its teachings, message and guidance are not confined to any specific region or nation;they are universal in nature.

The Qur'an presents an introduction of God. This God is not the God of any particular community or region or nation or period. He is the God of all past and future human beings and all forms of creation for that matter. He is the God of the east and the west. Since man has a special status in his creation, He is especially kind to human beings. He is the God of the past, present and future. In fact, He is independent of the boundaries of time and space.

The Qur'an addresses mankind, irrespective of their race and colour and language and nationality. He divides the entire humankind into only two categories- those who believe and those who do not. He always keeps the doors of guidance wide open for those who deny His existence. He respects their freedom of choice and openly proclaims that He considers men honourable. Moreover, He is the protector of every person's fundamental rights.

The Holy Qur'an grants space to man's natural desires. It also ensures that they are appropriately fulfilled. Unfortunately, man falls prey to various satanic schemes and ploys to corrupt his innate nature. Consequently, he falls to depths unknown to vile animals.

If you ponder over the teachings of the Qur'an and its message, you would realise that they fulfil the requirements of people of all eras and all nations. Nobody can claim to be independent of it.

The Holy Qur'an presents universal cultural values going beyond considerations of race, colour, language and nationality. It is the fundamental need of all human beings till the end of time and provides the motivating force required to drive these values. It encourages men to establish the truth. It created in them a sense of accountability. Are these values not required by people of all times and ages? If these values are lacking, there is every possibility of man turning into a beast.

MEN HAVE BEEN REFORMED AND SOCIETY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON QUR'ANIC PRINCIPLES

One more distinguishing trait of the Qur'an is that it is not merely a book of creed, worship, moral values and virtue.

Rather, it is a practical constitution for individual and collective life and a complete code of life. The Qur'an guides man to follow the path loved by God. The pure and perfect life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is an exemplary model of the adherence to the creed, morals, rites of worship and injunctions mentioned in the Qur'an. He is thus the living and practical version of the Qur'an. After him, his companions too were exemplary models of Qur'anic teachings. The Qur'an was extensively recited in the house of the Prophet's wives. Their homes were the best examples of Qur'anic teachings. Before the revelation of the Qur'an, the Arabian society was steeped in all sorts of moral corruption and decay. But after the Qur'an was revealed, its teachings and guidance brought about a renaissance in Arabian society.

All evils- small and big- were abolished. Goodness and morality held sway over men, families and society. The best welfare state in the world came to be established in Madinah. A totally new man came into existence under the guidance of the Qur'an; a new familial, social and administrative setup was established. This is a historically documented revolution, not some folklore or mythology which has been written out of devotion or with undue exaggeration. Religions and religious books have existed in this world even before the Qur'an, but nowhere in the world were individual and collective life, family and state established on its principles.

There were two major superpowers in the world then- Persia and Rome, and many other countries were their allies. But there was no proper government in Arabia; tribal culture prevailed. Islam established a developed and modern welfare state on the bedrock of Qur'anic values and principles. Arabia was such that peace and security could be enjoyed only four

months in a year. The other eight months were spent in battles and bloodshed. There was no regard for human life or the dignity of women. The economy was in such ruin that people were even forced to eat carcasses to stay alive. The same Arabia got transformed into an oasis of peace and security, justice and righteousness. The society reached a level of human dignity and honour, economic prosperity and success that cannot even be imagined in today's times. Poverty was wiped out. In fact, there was no poor person left to accept alms during the era of the Rashidun Caliphate.

A powerful government came to be established under the pristine influence of these Qur'anic teachings. Economics, morality, family and social systems, the educational system, culture and civilisation, law and judiciary all came into existence. There no longer remained any need to borrow any law or principle from foreign countries. The system established on Qur'anic guidelines was by all means a developed, prosperous and complete system. Accordingly, the culture established by this system ruled the world for many centuries thereafter.

THE QUR'AN DISCUSSES CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The central theme of the Qur'an is man. It deals with man's success and prosperity in this world and salvation in the hereafter. Calling this worldly life a stepping stone to reach eternal success, the Qur'an teaches us this prayer:

رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾

"O our Lord! Grant us goodness in this world and goodness in the hereafter and save us from the punishment of hellfire."

[Al-Baqarah 2: 201]

How can the Qur'an turn a blind eye to man's issues when its central theme itself is man? The Qur'an is not a book of some motivational speeches and moral teachings, nor is it merely a prayer book. It is, in fact, a constitution for all human beings. It deals with all his matters.

Not only does the Qur'an want human beings to attain material prosperity, it also wants peace and security, justice and righteousness, peace and tranquillity to be an integral part of their lives. It provides a peaceful environment not only for its followers, but also for those who reject it.

The Qur'an purges human society of discord, riots, chaos, conflicts, terrorism, injustice, tyranny and exploitation. It sees to it that human rights are not abused and eradicates social and moral evils. It prohibits alcohol and extra marital relationships. It does away with disease and illiteracy, poverty and deprivation, corruption, infanticide, violence and ill-treatment against women and children. These are not tall claims written to decorate the page. We have historical evidence to prove that a welfare society and a welfare state did get established on the basis of Qur'anic teachings. Even today, we can gain from it and solve our problems. Has there ever been any other ideology, philosophy or book on the basis of whose teachings and principles a welfare society and welfare state has come into existence?

Man's life can have routine mundane problems. But there is a danger of him succumbing to death and destruction when faced with serious issues and social and moral evils. History tells us that corrupt societies have been mowed down by the sickle of time. The Qur'an has explained the rise and fall of civilisations in much detail.

One striking feature of the Qur'an is that it deals with all the important and fundamental issues faced by man and discusses the source of those issues too. It lays bare the dire consequences of evil deeds. It then suggests practical and fool proof solutions to those issues. As we have mentioned above, it was on the basis of these Qur'anic teachings and fundamental principles that the serious problems faced by 7th Century Arabia (and later other parts of the world) were successfully solved, and a welfare society and welfare state were formed.

When the Qur'an was being revealed, the imperialistic ambitions of two global superpowers had wreaked havoc in the world. Wars and bloodshed had led to a sustained belligerent atmosphere. In such circumstances, peace and security and law and justice prevailed over fifteen lakh square miles of the Arabian Peninsula in a matter of just 23 years.

THE QUR'AN MAINTAINS BALANCE AND EQUILIBRIUM IN LIFE

The Creator of the universe has maintained balance and equilibrium in the entire cosmos. This balance and equilibrium is found in Qur'anic teachings as well. When we study Qur'anic teachings, we understand that it has no trace of extremism or disproportion. Moreover, it has not put unnatural restrictions on man that are at conflict with his innate desires.

Maulana Jirjees Kareemi writes:

> *"Balance refers to the equilibrium between two conflicting and opposing aspects of an entity, such that none of the two sides is unduly emphasised while the other side is neglected. There should be an equal inclination towards both aspects. Just as things are weighed in a balance pan and it is considered balanced when both*

its pans are at the same level, so also justice is the basic element of balance. This means that every entity is given whatever is its due and justice is ensured with both the conflicting entities. This balance and equilibrium can be explicitly found in all the commands of the Qur'an- creed, worship, morality, dealings and even the general etiquettes of life.

[Islam Ki Imtiyazi Khususiyaat, p. 119]

The Qur'an sees human life as a single unit and instructs men to obey God in all walks of life. Life has not been compartmentalised here as it has been in some other religions, ideologies and philosophies.

The Qur'an does not say, 'Give to Caesar what belongs to the Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God' (as has been said in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark... translator). Here, all aspects of life have been brought under the ambit of Islam. The world and the hereafter, the material and the spiritual, the individual and the community, the rights of God and the rights of men, home, family and society, financial dealings and rites of worship- the Qur'an teaches balance, justice and equilibrium in each and every aspect of human life; and in each of these aspects it prohibits injustice and leaning towards any extreme.

There are certain religions which preach that the usage of material resources creates hurdles in the quest for spirituality and piety. Hence, abstention from the world and its pleasures has been made binding for one's spiritual development. Similarly, certain philosophers have veered so much towards the individual that they have allowed him to harm the collective interest of the society ostensibly in the name of individual rights and freedom. This is one extreme. On the other extreme we have some other philosophers who have veered so much towards the community that the individual has been left

deprived of human rights and personal liberties. The Qur'an shows a balanced middle way through both these extremes.

THE QUR'AN HAS RATIONAL ANSWERS TO THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS REGARDING LIFE AND THE UNIVERSE

The Qur'an discusses the fundamental questions of human life and provides rational answers to the same. It is a distinguishing feature of the Qur'an that the answers to these questions have been given with supportive arguments and are based on knowledge and conviction. The Qur'an never asks its reader to blindly accept its proposition. Instead, it asks him to think and ponder over it. The same goes with the fundamental questions regarding human life. It encourages its readers to ponder over its answers in light of supportive arguments. There is no compulsion in Islam. Man is free to accept or reject it. God would bring him to book on the Day of Judgement if he has misused this liberty.

The Qur'an tells us that these questions have a deep relation with man's practical life, moral attitude, the fulfilment of his rights and duties, general relations and the discharge of social responsibilities. If the answers to these important questions are based on assumptions and conjecture, it would result in a defective character, wrong moral attitude and approach. But when these questions are answered in the light of divine revelation, absolute knowledge and holistic arguments, it leads to a chaste character and clean social attitude and lifestyle.

- What are those fundamental questions?
- Who is the Creator of life and the universe and all forms of creation?

- What are the characteristics and qualities of the Creator?
- Why has He created all this?
- What is man's status in this universe? What is the purpose of his life?
- What is the nature of man's relation with his Creator and other human beings, and what does it entail?
- How can one attain the Lord's pleasure?
- What is death? Is there life after death? If yes, how would it be?
- What is the truth behind heaven and hell?
- Can good and evil deeds have the same consequence?

Philosophers and sages have pondered over these questions all throughout human history. They have tried to provide some answers too, but the fact remains that all their philosophical efforts were based on mere logic, reasoning, conjecture, assumptions and estimates, and it is needless to say that there can be- and indeed has been- a difference of opinion among the philosophers in the conclusions they have arrived at, and very serious ones at that. Whose philosophy should we accept and whose philosophy should we reject? What should be the basis of this acceptance and rejection? Also, what has been the resultant character of the people who have accepted their philosophy? What have been their values and what has been their approach? What was the effect on family and society? Could high moral values of humanity and spiritual development be made possible, or was man turned into a beast and a curse for fellow human beings? One more important point is that there has been a conflict in the words and deeds of many philosophers

themselves. Individuals could not be developed on sound lines on the basis of their ideologies and philosophies; a good society and a viable state could not be established either.

As far as science is concerned, it is incapable of providing any conclusive answer to these questions. This is because the basis of scientific knowledge and experimentation is the information received by our five sensory organs. These questions fall out of the scope of science. Whatever attempts scientists have nevertheless made are not free of assumptions and estimates, conjectures and guesswork.

The Qur'an has provided rational answers to these questions on the basis of divine revelation. It has guided man to the correct attitude and approach which springs from those answers. It was only God who could have provided the true and confirmed answers to these questions, for it is God alone who is the source of all knowledge.

There can be no doubt about the rationality of these answers. It is God alone who can tell us what He expects from us. His prophets and messengers have provided these answers on His behalf. We do not find any mutual contradiction in the answers they have given to these important and fundamental questions. Even the enemies of these pious and blessed messengers have always attested to their upright character and chaste life. The prophets and messengers had no vested interest; they used to convey these teachings purely for the sake of humanity. They had proclaimed that this knowledge was not their own; they were simply conveying it from God Almighty.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE QUR'AN ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

Today, man has reached the zenith of knowledge. We are witnessing a knowledge explosion. All the new sciences and the piercing brightness of their multiple branches have bedazzled men. He is amazed at all these developments and does not know what he should expect next. Intellect is at its peak. But it is worth appreciating that the Qur'anic teachings have not yet been falsified, and there is no chance they would be proven wrong in the future either.

When science was developing in the West, it was seen as a death knell for religion and the idea of God. The age of religion was over, they felt, and now is the age of science. Science is the god of this new era (God forbid). But it should be known that the religion the scientists abhorred was Christianity. The (corrupted) Bible clashed with scientific discoveries and observations on innumerable fronts. But it is also a fact that it has been a millennium and a half since the Qur'an was revealed, and yet all the knowledge we have accumulated and all our intellect and wisdom have been unable to prove any teaching or principle of the Qur'an wrong or incompatible with intellect or reason.

Qur'anic teachings and principles and injunctions have strong rational grounds. In fact, the Qur'an challenges its readers that if they find any fault in its teachings, they should present arguments in support of this allegation. The Qur'an is so confident about its teachings, principles and injunctions because they come from the One who is the source of absolute knowledge and wisdom. His knowledge cannot have any lacunae. He is over and above the boundaries of space and time. He is man's Creator. No one else can know man like He does,

and no one else can be as concerned about man as He is. God's knowledge covers the past, the present and the future.

The wisdom and true meaning of certain teachings of the Qur'an are gradually dawning upon man. For instance, why were the fasts ordained? Muslims have been fasting all throughout Ramazan since the past fourteen centuries because their faith requires them to do so. But now many diseases are being treated by means of fasting. The health and physical benefits of fasting have come to the fore in recent times. Or take interest for example. There was a time when interest-free banking, social insurance system and trade was considered simply impossible. But new research has proved that interest has been one of the most important and fundamental causes of poverty, social difficulties and hunger and deprivation. The Qur'an had banned interest in the 7th Century while keeping trade legal. The role of *zakat* (compulsory annual charity) in eradicating economic problems and its financial benefits cannot be overlooked. The same applies to all the principles, teachings and injunctions of the Qur'an.

Under the influence of Qur'anic teachings, Muslims laid the foundations of experimental science and founded modern knowledge. It is an undisputed historical fact that not only did Muslims achieve remarkable feats in the fields of science and sociology for many centuries, but they also led the world and guided them to new heights.

THE QUR'AN IS A YARDSTICK

The Qur'an is a criterion between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Anything can be judged on its basis to see how much of it is right and how much of it has been corrupted with falsehood.

Maulana Muhammad Farooq Khan writes:

> *"The Qur'an is the biggest requirement of all communities. It is not for nothing that the Qur'an calls upon people to have faith in it and treat it as a constitution of their life. The Qur'an extends its invitation to even those communities which are in possession of a divine book. This is because even their own books receive validation from the Qur'an, and it is the Qur'an which completes them. The corruptions people's unwarranted interferences have wreaked in those books can be removed using none but the Qur'an. It is only the Qur'an that can tell us that this much of it is true and where and how much falsehood has been added to it. The Qur'an says:*

يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ كَثِيرٗا مِّمَّا كُنتُمۡ تُخۡفُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ وَيَعۡفُواْ عَن كَثِيرٖۚ قَدۡ جَآءَكُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ نُورٞ وَكِتَٰبٞ مُّبِينٞ ١٥ يَهۡدِي بِهِ ٱللَّهُ مَنِ ٱتَّبَعَ رِضۡوَٰنَهُۥ سُبُلَ ٱلسَّلَٰمِ وَيُخۡرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ بِإِذۡنِهِۦ وَيَهۡدِيهِمۡ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٖ مُّسۡتَقِيمٖ ١٦

"O People of the Book! There has come to you Our Messenger, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary). There has come to you from God a new light and a perspicuous Book wherewith God guides all those who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darknesses, by His will, to light- guides them to a path that is straight." *[Al-Maidah 5: 15-16]*

[Haqeeqat-e-Nubuwwat, p. 98]

THE QUR'AN CONTAINS UNIVERSAL VALUES

The values presented by the Qur'an are universal and equally apply to all human beings. These values are not restricted to some particular region, community, language or

class. Rather, they are global and address every man on earth. These values are imperative for the development, progress, success and salvation of man. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ not only conveyed and preached these values, he also implemented them. Do you find the mention of these values in human history in societies that are impious? The modern age prides itself upon a few human values. But are they really being implemented?

The first and most pristine personification of these values is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself, on whom these values had been revealed. His house became a model. His companions became models. Why, the entire Islamic society of Madinah rose as a practical manifestation of these values.

These values are:

- Human dignity
- Human honour
- All human beings are vicegerents of God
- All human beings belong to a single family
- Equality and social justice
- Freedom of thought and expression
- Freedom of dissent and critique
- Freedom of creed and religion
- Gender justice
- Women's dignity and honour
- Justice
- Peace and security
- Religious tolerance
- Freedom from all forms of slavery
- Freedom from blind faith
- Scientific approach

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7

Nothing But the Qur'an

THE MOST IMPORTANT point of discussion about the Qur'an is, 'Why nothing but the Qur'an?' We have several religious books in our own country and around the world belonging to various religions. Why not other books, then? Why only the Qur'an? It is important to understand this point for every seeker of truth. For, it is only when we understand this point that we would properly benefit from the Qur'an.

Please ponder over the following points in the light of whatever we have discussed until now:

God has fulfilled man's most important requirement through the Qur'an. God has provided the best guidance for man's spiritual and moral life. Prophets and messengers, appointed by God, kept conveying divine guidance and guidelines to human beings. Books were revealed upon them. The last of these books is the Holy Qur'an, which has been revealed upon the last and final Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The unseen truths which are deeply related to our success in this world and salvation in the hereafter have been defined in the Qur'an.

All the books that God had revealed before the Qur'an could not remain preserved. Those books were rendered corrupt by human intervention; they were doctored and edited time and again. Hence, the divine guidance contained therein got

obscured. All fundamental religious books other than the Qur'an too contain moral teachings and discourses, but they do not contain any constitution for one's life by which the individual can be developed, a family can be reformed and a society can be established. Despite all the corruption found therein, they still contain passages which seem to predict the Qur'an. But the Qur'an does not speak of any book that would be revealed after it.

Except for the Qur'an, the actual purpose for which those other books had been revealed is no longer getting fulfilled, viz. obtaining divine guidance. Moreover, those books had been revealed for a specific period, a specific community and for a limited span of time. Because of these two reasons, these books have been abrogated by God for all practical purposes. Now, the only book in which divine guidance can be found is the Qur'an. But this does not mean that those previous books are no longer sacred or that they would no longer be considered divine revelations. All those books need to be respected, and all those books about which it is known that they were revealed by God would still be considered divine revelations. Truth and reality, however, remains paramount. Hence, the Qur'an, which is the last and final revelation, should be accepted, should be believed in, and its injunctions should be followed.

Rejecting the Qur'an is as good as rejecting all the other books as well. And accepting the Qur'an as the final word of God is as good as confirming all the previous books as well. Likewise, acting upon the Qur'an would ensure that the other books have also been acted upon.

The Qur'an contains the basic message of all the previous books. The original message contained in the previous scriptures, divine guidance and teachings have been completely

ingrained in the Qur'an, and they have thus been preserved for posterity. The Qur'an is not the opponent of past scriptures; rather, it is their protector and guardian, which testifies to their original teachings. Hence, the Qur'an declares that it does not present any unique proposition or teaching that was not found in the previous scriptures. All it does is that it presents their original teachings and principles before mankind for the very last time in a pure and reliable manner. Hence, the followers of the previous scriptures should not have any hesitation in accepting the Qur'an as the divine word of God.

Rejecting the Qur'an, or treating it as a religious text of the Muslims alone, and then refraining from studying it on these grounds is not appropriate. This is because there is no other reliable source of guidance present in the world today. Divine guidance can only be found preserved in the Holy Qur'an. A study of the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ makes it easier for us to understand the Qur'an.

The greatest favour of the Qur'an on humankind is that man can receive divine guidance in its complete, preserved form by studying it. It warns man about his fate in the afterlife. Death finishes off human life. There is no power in this world that can save man from the clutches of death. We have got only a single life to act. The Qur'an emphasises on the fact that death is the beginning of an eternal and endless life. Its success is permanent and its loss too is permanent.

Maulana Sadruddin Islahi writes:

> *"This divine scripture has abrogated all the other previous divine scriptures. Now, no other book enjoys divine sanction today. The correct approach in life and the proper line of thought and practice can only be obtained by this Qur'an. This obviously does not mean*

that the previous books are no longer being regarded as divine scriptures. All it means is that the Lord and God who had revealed them has decided that those books should no longer be considered constitutions for human life, and this status should now be given to this last book, the Qur'an, alone. As per this divine decision, it is necessary for all human beings- be they Arab or non-Arab, black or white, Asian or European- to follow the Qur'an alone, because following only this Book would now qualify as worship and obedience to the Lord." *[Qur'an Majeed Ka Ta'aruf, p. 44]*

He also writes:

"The Qur'an is a book which has been revealed for the entire world. After the revelation of this book, God has abrogated all the other scriptures. Now, the obedience and worship of God in this world is entirely dependent upon following this book. This makes the matter very serious. No person has now been left with any excuse to look down upon the Qur'an and neglect it and its claim. By doing so, he would do great injustice to his core interests and display extreme lack of foresight. He is being informed about the journey of life he is busy in that it can lead him to success only when he has had accepted the guidance shown by the Qur'an. But man does not pay any attention to this call. He remains blissfully ignorant of the truth. There have been millions of people who have accepted the Qur'an and are following it in their lives. And whenever it has been accepted in all earnest, life was filled with righteousness and piety in the individual sphere, the society, the state and all walks of life."

[ibid, pp. 51-52]

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8

The Qur'an Has Done A Favour Upon Mankind

ALTHOUGH RELIGIONS, the followers of those religions, religious guides and priests and religious books did exist even before the Qur'an was revealed some fifteen hundred years back, man was given to several misunderstanding about the unseen truths. The issue of accepting or rejecting unseen truths is not a very simple one; it has a deep bearing on his individual and collective life and approach. The Qur'an has equipped us with wholesome guidance in this regard. Moreover, while the Qur'an laid down the criteria of being a true religion, it also reformed and corrected the narrow concepts of religion prevalent in society.

All these are great favours that the Qur'an has done on mankind. These favours can be enumerated as under:

- The correct idea of the Creator and knowledge of His qualities and attributes
- The proper concept of life and the universe and man's exact status and position
- Emphasis on obtaining knowledge
- The purpose of life
- A proclamation of the Freedom of faith and religion
- An affirmation of the Right to Dissent

- Focus on the direct relation of man with God (bypassing the priestly class)
- The message that there is a single God, all men have a common ancestry and there is only one deen acceptable to God.
- Stipulation of Women's Rights
- Abolition of racism based on lineage and colour.
- Solution to slavery
- Protection of human rights
- Proclamation of religious tolerance
- Institution of a humane code of war
- Just treatment for all
- Deliverance of Social Justice
- A Constitution for life and guidelines to a complete system of life.

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9

Who Are Those Who Receive Qur'anic Guidance And Those Who Are Left Deprived of It?

DIVINE GUIDANCE IS *the only* guidance. God has not held man guilty of some original sin, saying that he is born a sinner. No! Rather, He has created him as a good and righteous person. The path He has chosen for man and the constitution He has decided for him to guide him through life has been detailed in the Qur'an. Revealing a book was not the only part of His scheme; He also commissioned Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the recipient of the Qur'an, as His last and final Messenger. The blessed life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a personification of the Holy Qur'an. He explained the meanings of the Qur'anic ayaat and acted upon them to present a model before us. The Qur'an speaks of the Prophet's responsibilities of teaching and grooming the people in his capacity of being God's Messenger.

But God does not bestow His guidance at random. There are some naive people who take no interest in their good or bad end or their success and fate in the hereafter, who are not at all inclined towards righteousness. How can such people be guided? How can a person, who thinks- without any supportive argument or knowledge or rationale- that life is just about

eating, drinking and dying one day and that there would be no accountability,ever lead a responsible life? He would think that success lies in making the most of this life and spending it in fun and frolic. Injustice, fraud and deceit would all be acceptable to him if they can ensure his success. What concern would such a person have for God's pleasure or divine guidance?

An intelligent person, on the other hand, believes on the basis of arguments, knowledge and sound rationale that he is indeed the representative and vicegerent of God on earth. This status of his is a very important one. This status has given man some powers and authority, making him accountable before his Creator. God has granted him life. It is necessary for man to fulfil the purpose for which he has been granted this life. This means that it is imperative for him to follow His guidance. If man does not follow this guidance he would be a failure, regardless of what great feats he has apparently achieved in this world. He would still suffer an immense loss in the hereafter.

God says:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾
ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

"Say, O Prophet, 'Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to their deeds? They are those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their

works. They are those who deny the Signs of their Lord and the fact that they would meet Him in the hereafter. Their deeds have hence become worthless, and We would not, on the Day of Judgement, give them any importance. That is their reward, hell, because they rejected faith, and took My signs and My Messengers in jest.
As to those who have believed and performed righteous deeds, they will have the Gardens of Paradise as a lodging, wherein they would dwell forever. They will not desire any change therein."

[Al-Kahf 18: 103-108]

It should be known that God does not force guidance upon anyone. If a person wishes to walk on the crooked path, God would not force him to take the straight path. It is man who requires divine guidance, not God. It is in his own interest to accept and follow it. Even if all the people of the world- the first and the last- were to accept this guidance and become righteous, pious men, it would not increase His grandeur by an ounce. And if all the people of the world ignore this guidance and disobey Him, rebel against Him, it would not decrease His grandeur by an ounce.

Some people think that it is important to have a Guru for one to gain proximity with God and to tread the path of truth. They believe that one should have faith in the Guru and surrender his affairs to him. Everything that the Guru says is treated as divine. They also believe that a person cannot find God if he rejects or disobeys the Guru. The fundamental question that needs to be asked here is whether God has said any such thing in any of His books? Can any Guru claim that he has been commissioned by God to guide mankind? Such guidance can only be conveyed by a Prophet. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last of these prophets. He, thus, is the true guide and mentor of all human beings till the end of time. If a Guru or guide presents the teachings and guidance conveyed by

Prophet Muhammad and follows it too, we can very well benefit from him. Details to this end can be read in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet himself. Prophetic guidance is actually divine guidance. All the prophets who predated him served as guides and religious leaders for their contemporary people. We would not have any new prophet or religious leader after Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an that was revealed upon him in the span of 23 years is absolutely preserved. Even his words, deeds and all aspects of his prophetic life are completely preserved. This does not leave any further need of any new prophet or religious leader.

Maulana Maududi writes:

> *"Once man turns his attention towards God, he begins to see the path that would take him to God. As for the person who does not have the slightest concern that he would have to one day stand in front of his Lord and account for his thoughts and actions, even a thousand sermons and admonitions prove futile in his case; the truth never enters his heart and there is no way he can be convinced to adopt the straight path."* *[Tafheemat, Vol 1]*

Accepting guidance and saving oneself from going astray are made possible by God's express decision alone. But the prerequisite here is that man should have a yearning for it. Accepting guidance and saving oneself from going astray are the most important issues a person can ever encounter in his life. It is another matter if a person keeps himself aloof from this issue or neglects it. What attitude and approach should a person adopt so as to receive guidance?

Maulana Maududi further writes:

> *"It also happens at times that man continues to sway between guidance and ignorance for many years, his will-power being too*

weak to decide upon either of these two options. Some unfortunate men remain in this state till their last breath, some others decide upon ignorance and certain others finally accept the divine hints of guidance after a protracted period. The most fortunate are those sound natured and right minded people who make proper use of their God-gifted intellect, their eyes, ears and their strengths. They derive accurate conclusions from what they see and experience, and learn the right lessons from the signs God sends them. The evil influences fail to entice them and falsehood falls short of deceiving them. At the very first sight of the crooked path of ignorance they realise that it is unfit to walk upon. Then, as soon as they turn away and move ahead in the search for truth, the truth comes forth to welcome them and the light of guidance illuminates their path. After having thus recognised the truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood there is no power in the world that succeeds in making them falter and deviate from the right path and go astray." [ibid]

THOSE WHO OBTAIN GUIDANCE

The initial ayaat of Surah alBaqarah shed light on the prerequisites for obtaining divine guidance:

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۛ فِيْهِ ۛ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝٢ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۝٣ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ۝٤
اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝٥

"This is the book about which there is no doubt; a guidance for those conscious of God, who believe in the unseen, establish prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad) and what was

revealed before you, and who are certain of the hereafter. It is these who are upon right guidance and it is these who are successful."

[Al-Baqarah 2: 2-5]

For a person to obtain guidance from the Qur'an, it is important for him to develop a longing of seeking the pleasure of his Creator, his Benefactor, his Lord and only deity- God Almighty.

God says:

يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ كَثِيرٗا مِّمَّا كُنتُمۡ تُخۡفُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ وَيَعۡفُواْ عَن كَثِيرٖۚ قَدۡ جَآءَكُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ نُورٞ وَكِتَٰبٞ مُّبِينٞ ١٥ يَهۡدِي بِهِ ٱللَّهُ مَنِ ٱتَّبَعَ رِضۡوَٰنَهُۥ سُبُلَ ٱلسَّلَٰمِ وَيُخۡرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ بِإِذۡنِهِۦ وَيَهۡدِيهِمۡ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٖ مُّسۡتَقِيمٖ ١٦

"O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from God a light and a clear Book by which God guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light by His permission and guides them to a straight path."

[Al-Maida 5: 15-16]

This means that the Qur'an provides guidance for those who seek His pleasure. It invites man to the truth, and also tells us who would respond to this invitation:

إِنَّمَا يَسۡتَجِيبُ ٱلَّذِينَ يَسۡمَعُونَۘ وَٱلۡمَوۡتَىٰ يَبۡعَثُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيۡهِ يُرۡجَعُونَ ٣٦

"And those who hear will respond. As for the dead- God would resurrect them; then to Him they would be returned."

[Al-An'am 6: 36]

While explaining this ayat, Maulana Maududi writes:

> *'Those who hear' refers to those people whose conscience is alive, who have not kept their intellect and reason suspended and who have not put locks of prejudice and indifference on the doors of their hearts. In contrast, 'dead' are those people who are blindly wandering about without using any thought or wisdom and are adamant upon sticking to the way shown to them in utter disregard to whatever they are told, no matter how true or factual it might be. [Tarjuma-e-Qur'an ma'a Mukhtasar Hawashi, p. 347]*

In order to obtain guidance from the Qur'an, it is important for man to properly understand the reality of the transient life of this world, and accept whatever has been written therein about the eternal afterlife. The hereafter is an unseen reality. It has been extremely kind of God that He has not kept us in the dark about this important reality. Any person who refuses to accept the teachings of the Qur'an regarding this world and the next cannot obtain guidance from it. For one to obtain guidance from the Qur'an, it is necessary for him to believe that there would be a Day of Judgement when every person would be presented before God and everyone would have to account for his/her deeds. Those who have had believed and performed good deeds would be in Paradise, while those who do not have these would be in Hell.

God says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا وَرَضُوا۟ بِالْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا۟ بِهَا
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِنَا غَٰفِلُونَ ۝٧ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ مَأْوَىٰهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا۟
يَكْسِبُونَ ۝٨ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُم
بِإِيمَٰنِهِمْ ۖ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَٰرُ فِى جَنَّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ ۝٩ دَعْوَىٰهُمْ فِيهَا

سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيْهَا سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝١٠

"Indeed, those who do not expect the meeting with Us and are satisfied with the life of this world and feel secure therein and those who are heedless of Our signs- for those their refuge will be the Fire because of what they used to earn. Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds- their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Beneath them rivers will flow in the Gardens of Pleasure. Their call therein will be 'Exalted are You, O God' and their greeting therein will be 'Peace'. And their final words would be 'Praise to God, the Lord of the worlds'." *[Yunus10: 7-10]*

The most important teaching of the Qur'an is *Tauheed-* i.e. there is only one God. In support of this monotheism, the Qur'an presents arguments from man's own self and the signs dispersed in the universe. It is on the basis of these arguments that it calls upon people to accept monotheism. The opposite of *tauheed* is *Shirk-* i.e. associating partners in His self/His attributes/His authority/His rights. God would not forgive this sin of polytheism/paganism if the person guilty of this sin has not sincerely repented to Him before his death. The end consequence of polytheism is a dreadful punishment in hellfire. The Qur'an tells us that there is no rationale or justification for polytheism whatsoever. It is entirely based on guesswork and conjecture, not on any reality.

God says:

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ۭ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ۝ قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى

الْحَقِّ ۚ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ لِلْحَقِّ ۗ اَفَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّتَّبَعَ اَمَّنْ لَّا يَهِدِّيْٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّهْدٰى ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ ۖ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

"Ask them, 'Are there among your partners any who begins creation and then repeats it?' Say: 'God begins creation and then repeats it, so how are you deluded?' Ask them: 'Are there among your partners any who guides to the truth?' Say: 'God guides to the truth. So is He who guides to the truth more worthy of being followed or he who guides not unless he is guided? Then what is wrong with you? How do you judge?'

And most of them follow nothing except assumption. Indeed, assumption avails nothing against the truth at all. Indeed, God knows what they do. And it was not possible for this Qur'an to be produced by other than God. It is rather a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the former Scripture. There is no doubt therein; it is from the Lord of the worlds."

[Yunus 10: 34-37]

Man would never gain from divine guidance if he follows his base desires unhindered.

God says:

فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُوْنَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

"And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from God? Indeed, God does not guide the wrong doing people." *[Al-Qasas2 8: 50]*

Man gets deprived of divine guidance even when he ignores the Qur'an in favour of fun and frolic, song and dance and other such worthless preoccupations. Not only this, in his arrogance and self-deceit he does not pay any attention to the Qur'an.

God says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ
عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ۝ وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ
اٰيٰتُنَا وَلّٰى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَاَنَّ فِيْٓ اُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ
بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۝ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ النَّعِيْمِ ۝
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ۭ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝

"And there are some people who purchase idle tales to mislead others from the way of God and throw ridicule on the path. For such there will be a humiliating chastisement. When our signs are rehearsed to such a person, he turns away in arrogance, as if he heard them not, as if there were deafness in both his ears. Announce to him a grievous punishment. As for those who believe and perform righteous deeds, there will be Gardens of Bliss to dwell therein forever. The promise of God is true, and He is Exalted in power and Wise." *[Luqman 31: 6-9]*

For his own good and safety, man should pay careful attention to whatever is being said to him. He should then decide whether it is true or false on the basis of sound arguments and, for his own sake, accept it if is indeed true.

God says:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ اَحْسَنَهٗ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ
الَّذِيْنَ هَدٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمْ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ۝

"O Prophet, give glad tidings to My servants who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones God has guided, and it is those who are people of understanding." *[Al-Zumar39: 17-18]*

A few ayaat later, the Qur'an describes itself in the following words:

اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ ۖ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُوْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ۚ ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُوْدُهُمْ وَقُلُوْبُهُمْ اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۗ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ

"God has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful Message in the form of a Book, consistent with itself, (yet) repeating (its teachings in various aspects). The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble thereat; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of God. Such is the guidance of God; He guides therewith whom He pleases." *[Al-Zumar 39: 23]*

'God guides whoever He wills' means that God does not force His guidance upon those who show no interest in receiving this guidance or walking on the path shown by God. On the contrary, those who are interested in their guidance and are eager to receive it are not only shown the way, but they are also guided along that way. God paves the way for those who seek it.

So far, what we have discussed in this chapter are the qualities of those who receive this guidance and of those who are left deprived of it. This is a very important chapter. Every man is free to select or reject any way or ideology. But in this short examination period that we have in this world, men are being evaluated on this very basis- whether they opt for the divine guidance or reject it. Just think about it- if someone makes a mistake in this choice or fails to appreciate its colossal importance he would have to stare at an enormous loss in the hereafter in the form of eternal perdition. We have all received only *one* life; we would not get a second chance. No person has

ever risen back to life after his death, nor is there any such possibility in this world in the future as well. It is for this reason that the Qur'an urges man to keep his head over his shoulders and work sensibly in this world. He should make a prudent decision that would grant him eternal bliss in the hereafter and save him from eternal misery.

The message of the Qur'an is meant for one and all, but one should keep the following points in mind in order to benefit from it:

- It is essential for man to have an urge and desire for guidance. He should seek this from God in all earnest.

- Man should be concerned about his good and bad fate. What would be his fate if he leads a neglectful life and is suddenly met with death?

- Man should be desirous of being granted a successful eternal afterlife and of being saved from eternal perdition.

- He should have a firm determination and resolve to fulfil the purpose of his creation as per the wishes of his Creator.

- It is important to have faith in the unseen realities- believing them deep in the heart and expressing the same with the tongue. He should accept the existence of God, life after death, angels, heaven and hell and other such unseen truths as guided by his knowledge and intellect and insight in accordance with the divine scripture.

- He should listen carefully to whatever God has revealed and try to understand it. It is essential for him to follow its best aspect.

- He should have a sincere urge to obtain the pleasure of his Creator, Benefactor, Granter of Bounties and True Deity, and to save himself from His wrath.

- Man should try to cultivate a sound nature. He should be willing to fulfil the requirements of his innate nature and conscience in the proper manner.

- He should derive correct lessons and draw proper interpretations from the events, episodes, experiences and observations of his life.

- Man should take a keen interest in good and righteous deeds in his personal life. Likewise, he should also save himself from committing evil, corruption, chaos, injustice and atrocities.

- He should recognise the rights of fellow human beings and spend in charity the wealth God has given him with a sincere heart.

THOSE WHO REMAIN DEPRIVED OF GUIDANCE

Who are those people who remain deprived of divine guidance? The Qur'an gives us a sketch of their attitude as well, the major points of which are as follows:

- Reeling in arrogance.
- Insisting upon polytheism/paganism
- Denying the afterlife and the accountability in the hereafter. In other words, rejecting the unseen realities.

- Blindly following the way of one's forefathers.
- Unbridled following of one's carnal and base desires.
- Having no inclination towards good deeds, and having interest in disruptive and evil deeds.
- Falling prey to prejudices.
- Getting stuck in conjecture and false assumptions.
- Being racist
- Giving all importance to the worldly life and forsaking the hereafter.
- Spending one's life in song and dance, wine and vanities.

When you study the Qur'an, all these topics would keep coming before your eyes one after another.

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10

The Fundamental Teachings of the Qur'an

MONOTHEISM

The most important and fundamental teaching of the Qur'an is Monotheism- i.e. to believe in a single Creator, Lord, Master and Deity and all His attributes with all your heart and to abstain from making anyone his associate in any respect.

The other fundamental teachings of the Qur'an include:

Belief in prophethood- i.e. prophets were sent to guide human beings

Belief in the hereafter- i.e. there would be an eternal life after death

It is very important for a person who seeks to understand the Qur'an and gain guidance from it to properly understand these three fundamental points of doctrine. The Qur'an explains these points using wonderful arguments, beautiful passages and a wise approach. These teachings of the Qur'an are equally meant for all human beings. The innumerable signs spread out in the universe and within man himself testify to this doctrine. The Qur'an encourages man to think over them:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلْأَرْضَ فِرَٰشًا وَٱلسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَأَنزَلَ
مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا۟ لِلَّهِ
أَندَادًا وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

"O people! Worship your Lord who created you and those who came before you, that you may have the chance to become righteous; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy, and sent down rains from the heavens and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance. Then set not up rivals unto God when you know the truth." *[Al-Baqarah2: 21-22]*

Explaining these ayaat, Maulana Maududi writes:

"It means that when you acknowledge this fact- and you know very well- that it is God who is doing all this, then it necessarily follows that your worship should also be reserved for Him alone. Can there be anyone else who deserves to be worshipped? 'Setting rivals unto God' means that of the various kinds of worship, a person devotes some of those kinds of worship to someone other than God. Later passages of the Qur'an would tell us in detail what are those kinds of worship which need to be reserved for God alone. Associating anyone with God in those kinds of worship would amount to polytheism; and polytheism and paganism is something that the Qur'an seeks to abolish." *[Tafheemal Qur'an, Vol 1]*

The Qur'an has introduced us to the Creator of life and the universe. It has discussed His attributes. It has detailed the implications, effects and outcomes of believing in His pristine qualities. It has given us convincing arguments which appeal to our mind and heart. The best part of the Qur'an is that its claims, arguments and propositions are all too perspicuous; they can be easily understood without any confusion

whatsoever. The Qur'an has told us that God is the sole Creator of all forms of creation, including mankind. No one else has partaken in this task. All those living and dead persons whom people have made partners in divinity on the basis of their ignorance or lack of knowledge or ancestral tradition have also been created by the same God. Had they actually been partners in divinity, how could they have been born and how did they all die at their respective times?

The Creator is free of all shortcomings. He does not stand in need of anyone, while everyone else needs Him. He does not ask for any favour, but everyone seeks favour from Him. He alone is the Creator, everyone and everything else is just a creation. No creation is the Creator or even at par with the Creator. There is no one who has created like He has, and there is none like Him.

We have a small Surah in the Qur'an called Ikhlaas. The creed of monotheism has been explained therein in the following words:

قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدٌ ۝١ اَللّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝٢ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۙ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ ۝٣ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ كُفُوًا اَحَدٌ ۝٤

"Say (O Prophet!), God is One. He is Free of all Needs. He neither begets, nor has he been begotten, and there is none like unto Him."

[Al-Ikhlaas 112:1-4]

God Almighty is not only the Creator, He is also the Lord, Master and Law giver. He has no partner in any of these roles. He does not have any *awtar* (reincarnated self) either. It is quite strange that although He has not made any creation His partner, nor does He require doing so, ignorant people have assigned partners to him all throughout history. They made

living and dead people partners in His being, His attributes, His rights and His authorities. They had no right to do so. This in itself is a very big blasphemy. Such people have lost the way themselves and have led others astray too.

The Qur'an says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ

"Who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about God?"

[Al-Saff 61: 7]

There is no logical or scientific basis to deny the existence of God. On the contrary, countless signs suggesting His existence are spread all over the universe and in man's own self.

God Almighty is the only deity. He has no co-species. He has not been begotten, nor does He have any child. He is the possessor of all good qualities, and He is free of all weaknesses.

He grants guidance to all forms of creation, especially human beings, who have been additionally guided by means of prophets and messengers.

Believing in God necessitates belief in prophets and messengers, and it should be known that rejecting one prophet is as good as rejecting them all.

God has revealed books upon these messengers. Hence, belief in God also necessitates belief in these books. Rejecting one book is as good as rejecting them all. And the last of these books is the Holy Qur'an.

Belief in God also entails belief in the guidance sent down by Him. In order to examine men, God has given them the choice of either accepting this guidance or rejecting it. He has

granted man a law for each and every aspect of his life. Abiding by this law is necessary for eternal success.

The opposite of monotheism is *kufr* (disbelief), atheism, polytheism and paganism. Maulana Maududi has explained *kufr* in very succinct words:

"The literal meaning of *kufr* is to conceal. This gives rise to the meaning of disbelief and it is said as an opposite of *imaan*. *Imaan* means to believe, have faith, accept and acknowledge. *Kufr*, on the other hand, means disbelief and rejection. The Qur'an tells us that there can be various forms of *kufr*.

- That man does not believe in God at all. He does not acknowledge His authority and refuses to accept Him as the Lord and deity of the universe and his own self, or refuses to accept Him as the sole Lord and deity.

- Or he believes in God but refuses to accept His commands and injunctions as the sole source of knowledge and law.

- Or he believes in-principle that it is indeed God's guidance that should be followed, but refuses to believe in the prophets and messengers God has sent for this purpose.

- Or he makes a distinction between the prophets, and believes in some and rejects some others on the basis of his own personal prejudices or his own choice.

- Or he rejects some or all of the teachings of doctrine, morality and law that the Prophets have conveyed from God.

- Or he believes in all these things as an ideology and philosophy, but deliberately disobeys divine injunctions and insists upon disobeying them. He builds up his life

not on the bedrock of obedience, but on the basis of abject disobedience.

All the above attitudes and approaches are rebellious against God. The Qur'an calls each of them *kufr*. This apart, the word *kufr* has also been used in the Qur'an at certain places to refer to ingratitude and has been juxtaposed with *shukr*. *Shukr* means that man ought to be grateful to God for the things He has granted him, that he should value those favours and use His bounties in the manner that pleases Him. His heart should be brimming with loyalty for his benefactor. On the contrary, *kufr* or ingratitude would mean that man either refuses to acknowledge his benefactor at all, giving his own abilities the credit for whatever he has received or he credits someone else or thinks that he has received it because of someone's intervention, or fails to value His favours and wastes it, or uses it in a manner that would not please God or rebels against Him despite reveling in His bounties. This kind of *kufr* is usually referred to as ingratitude, disloyalty, infidelity, rebellion and thanklessness."

[Tafheemul Qur'an Vol 1]

God says in the Qur'an:

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ كُنْتُمْ اَمْوَاتًا فَاَحْيَاكُمْ ۚ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ
ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۚ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوٰۤى اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَسَوّٰىهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ ؕ وَ هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

"How can you refuse to have faith in God seeing that you were without life, and He gave you life? He would then cause you to die, and will again bring you back to life, and again to Him would you return. It is He who has created for you all the things that are on earth, then He turned to the heaven and made them into seven firmaments, and He has perfect knowledge of all things."

[Al-Baqarah 2: 28-29]

The Qur'an has rejected polytheism and has put forward the fact that there is no rationale for polytheism at all. Knowledge and insight, logic and science- all say that polytheism is the opposite of truth. The only reason naive people believe in polytheism is because they have seen their ancestors and forefathers practice polytheism. Polytheism is not based on any truth or knowledge; it is rather based on assumptions and conjecture.

The Qur'an says:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ۭ قُلْ سَمُّوْهُمْ ۭ اَمْ تُنَبِّـُٔوْنَهٗ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ۭ

"And yet they ascribe partners to God. Say: But name them! Is it that you will inform Him of something He knows not on earth, or is it just lame speech?" *[Al-Ra'ad 13: 33]*

وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا ۝

"He who ascribes partners to God has certainly devised a sin most grievous." *[Al-Nisa' 4: 48]*

مَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَاۗؤُهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۭ

"They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before." *[Hud 11: 109]*

The weakness of polytheism has been explained in the Qur'an with the use of this parable:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا ذُبَابًا وَّلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ۭ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْـــًٔا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ۭ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ ۝

"O men! Here is a parable set forth. Listen to it. Those on whom you call besides God cannot even create a fly even if they met together for this purpose. And if the fly should snatch anything away from them they would have no power to release it from the fly. Feeble are those who petition and those whom they petition."

[Al-Hajj 22: 73]

Explaining this ayat, Maulana Yusuf Islahi writes:

"How can it be expected of those deities who cannot even create a fly- and creating a fly is also too much to ask, for they who cannot even take back the things the fly has snatched away from them- how can it be expected of them to be partners of the Creator of the heavens and earth, the Lord of the universe and the Omnipotent God? The ignorance and impudence of those people who bow their heads in reverence to those powerless idols is beyond despair."

[Qur'ani Taleemat, p. 126]

The attributes of God have been mentioned in the Qur'an at many places. For instance:

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلْحَیُّ الْقَیُّوْمُ ۚ لَا تَاْخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّلَا نَوْمٌ ؕ لَهٗ مَا فِی
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِیْ یَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهٗۤ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِهٖ ؕ یَعْلَمُ مَا
بَیْنَ اَیْدِیْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا یُحِیْطُوْنَ بِشَیْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهٖۤ اِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ ۚ
وَسِعَ كُرْسِیُّهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ ۚ وَلَا یَـُٔوْدُهٗ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِیُّ
الْعَظِیْمُ ﴿۲۵۵﴾

"God- there is no god but He- the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. Neither slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, but they shall not encompass any of

His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme."

[Al-Baqarah 2: 255]

At another place, the Qur'an says:

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عٰلِمُ الْغَیْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۲۲﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوْسُ السَّلٰمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَیْمِنُ الْعَزِیْزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا یُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ یُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۲۴﴾

"He is God, other than whom there is no deity- Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Gracious, the Merciful. He is God, other than whom there is no deity- the Sovereign, the Pure, the source of Peace and Perfection, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme. Glory to God! High is He above the partners they ascribe to Him. He is God- the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth declares His Praises and Glory, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise." *[Al-Hashr 59: 22-24]*

It is such a grave matter of ignorance that man should be ungrateful and disloyal to God despite enjoying the life He has given and the favours He has bestowed upon him, and instead show loyalty to someone else. This is unmasked rebellion against an entity as exalted as God, who is the Lord of the entire universe and the true deity in all respects. This is so grave a crime that it cannot be forgiven.

The Qur'an says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾

"God forgives not that partners should be set up against Him. But He forgives anything else from whom He pleases. And he who associates other with God has certainly fabricated a heinous sin."

[An-Nisa' 4: 48]

The end-result of polytheism has been described in the Qur'an in the following words:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۗ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٣٠﴾

"And they set up (false deities) as equal to God, to mislead men from His way. Say: Enjoy yourselves, for indeed, your destination is the Fire."

[Ibraheem 14: 30]

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ مَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾

"They have certainly disbelieved who say, 'God is Messiah, the son of Mary' while the Messiah had said, 'O Children of Israel, worship God who is my Lord and your Lord'. Indeed, he who associates others with God- for him God has forbidden Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers."

[Al-Maidah 5: 72]

PROPHETHOOD

Some aspects of the Islamic creed have been discussed with you in the preceding pages. We have discussed revelation, angels, guidance, monotheism etc. It was also made clear that man does not only have material or physical needs; he has moral and spiritual needs as well. Man does not sustain himself only with the food that he eats, the water that he drinks and the air that he breathes; his actual life is his moral and spiritual one. If moral consciousness is dead, man remains no more than a biped animal. The Creator is very kind to his creation, especially to man. Justice, mercy and wisdom are His most prominent attributes. It is He who has made man dwell on earth and showered him with his favours, rewards and mercy. He has also instructed man on morality and spirituality, having made extensive arrangements for his guidance. This arrangement is called Prophethood, and it is based on the following:

- The advent of prophets
- The revelation of books and scriptures upon these prophets/messengers
- The finality and conclusion of this prophethood

While explaining the concept of Prophethood, Maulana Muhammad Farooq Khan writes:

> *"The concept of prophethood is far removed from the material point of view. Materialist people believe that the universe is working on purely physical laws, and that there is no Omniscient God behind it; whatever is found in this world is simply the result of random permutations and combinations. The truth, however, is entirely different. The sophisticated system of the universe itself contradicts this claim. The unbound knowledge, wisdom and mercy that are*

seen pervading this vast universe, and the innate moral inclination and consciousness found in human beings cannot emanate from lifeless material. Man should be told what is right and what is wrong, what is justice and what is injustice, what is love and affection and what is bad and evil. He needs to be told how evil enters his life and how morality can reign supreme. He should be shown the straight and natural path of life. The correct answer to all these natural requirements of man is what is referred to as prophethood."

[Haqeeqat-e-Nubuwwat, pp.7-8]

It should also be known that all these prophets were men; men of the highest stature, but men nonetheless. The dissenters objected by saying that these people cannot be prophets. These men roam the markets, eat food and have wives and children. But the Qur'an argues that man is best suited to guide other men. How can an angel or other form of creation be a model for man? One more perspective, fed by ignorance, is that God Himself takes the form of a man and walks the earth. But God does not need the form and appearance of man; taking the form of a man does not augur well with His grandeur. How can a limitless entity take the form of a constrained, material entity which would die one day? And how can such an *awtar* become a model for human beings when an *awtar* is not human either?

God's prophets and messengers have appeared in various communities and periods. The Qur'an says:

وَإِنْ مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

"There has never been a community without a warner having lived among them." *[Al-Fatir 35: 24]*

وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ۝

"For every community is a guide." *[Ar-Ra'ad13: 7]*

It is necessary to believe in all the prophets and messengers for a person to obtain guidance from the Qur'an. No distinction can be made among the prophets. Similarly, it is also important to accept that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last and final Messenger. The guidance man was getting through the prophets since the beginning of mankind was bound to get completed one day. Mankind progressed in its journey and had matured with time. It had now reached a point when a single Messenger and Book of Guidance would have sufficed all communities, all mankind. Appointing different messengers for different communities was no longer required. Appointing a single Messenger and a single Book of Guidance for all communities and the entire world meant that both these sources should be secured and preserved till the end of time. Accordingly, you have read in the previous pages that the Qur'an has been completely preserved, and all the research scholars of the world are unanimous on this point. This Qur'an had been revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Hence, his life, his blessed words and all his activities and habits have also been preserved. There is now no danger of the guidance getting lost or getting corrupted. A complete model of divine guidance, intention and injunctions was now within man's reach for all posterity. The Holy Qur'an is now the last Book of Guidance for all the people of this world. This guidance is not exclusively meant for the people of any particular nation or race, colour or language or region. It is not even beyond the constraints of time and space. Hence, God, who has granted this guidance, Himself made the announcement that it is now complete and final.

Now that the deen had been completed, which in other words means that the entire arrangement of guidance had been finalised and preserved, there was no further need of any new prophet or scripture. Hence, the Qur'an made an announcement that the practice of sending prophets also comes to an end.

The Qur'an says:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ۝

"Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men; he is rather the Messenger of God and the last of the prophets. And God has knowledge of all things." *[Al-Ahzab 33: 40]*

Prophet Muhammad has reiterated this truth a number of times:

"The practice of sending prophets and messengers has come to an end. There would be no messenger or prophet after me."

[Tirmizi, Musnad Ahmad]

"The Children of Israel were led by prophets. When a prophet would expire, another prophet used to succeed him. But there would be no prophet after me, there would only be Caliphs."

[Bukhari]

"The example of me and the prophets who have preceded me is that of a building that a person has built. He made it very beautiful and attractive, but left the space of a brick vacant in a corner. People used to walk around and admire that building and speak in astonishment: 'Why has this brick not been placed here?' I am that brick. And I am the seal of the prophets."

[Bukhari and Muslim]

Some people are of the opinion that everyone should lead their lives under the explicit guidance of a Guru. This is a very important point. In order to understand this, it is very important that we understand the status of a prophet/messenger.

A Prophet or Messenger comes as God's representative. He receives authority and sanction from God. He does not spend time in contemplation and meditation to come to the conclusion that he is the messenger of God, or that he is the guide and leader of humanity in the capacity of being God's representative. Rather, this announcement is made by God. This is because prophethood is not something that a person can attain by his wishes or efforts. It is entirely God's prerogative as to when, where and how He would appoint a prophet for the guidance of His servants. There is no question of any person suggesting something to God in this regard.

The Qur'an says:

اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ

"God is most knowing of where He places His message."

[Al-An'am 6: 124]

One of the many distinguishing traits of a prophet/messenger is all the teachings and principles and injunctions he gives us are actually divine teachings, principles and injunctions emanating from God. He does not say anything of his own free will.

The Qur'an says:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى ۝ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى ۝

"Nor does he say anything of his own desire; it is no less than a revelation sent down to him."

[An-Najm 53: 3-4]

This means that the prophets cannot be credited with formulating the teachings, principles and injunctions they deliver; they but convey whatever has been revealed to them by God. They are thus the spokespersons of God Almighty.

When God would question Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgement if it was he who had told his people to take him and his mother as deities, he would reply:

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَآ أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِۦٓ أَنِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ

"I said not to them except what You commanded me- to worship God, who is my Lord and your Lord."

[Al-Maidah 5: 117]

This clearly shows that every Guru is required to abide by the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. If a person seeks guidance under a Guru, then the following words of the Prophet need to be kept in mind:

"O people! I am leaving behind two things among you- the Book of God and my Sunnah (my way)" *[Mu'atta Imam Malik]*

No Guru is in possession of any divine post, authority or sanction from God. If he teaches and guides other men, then he needs to teach under the guidance conveyed by the Prophet. This would ensure proper guidance of human beings and they would be saved from going astray after receiving this guidance. This is because the Guru's teachings in this case would actually be the Prophet's teachings. The Qur'an tells us that obeying the Prophets is akin to obeying God:

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ

"He who obeys the Messenger actually obeys God."

[An-Nisa' 4: 80]

وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۗ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا

"Take whatever the Messenger gives you, and refrain from that which he forbids you from." *[Al-Hashr 59: 7]*

اِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذَا دُعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا ۗ وَاُولٰۤئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾

"The only statement of the true believers when they are called to God and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, 'We hear and we obey'. And it is those who are successful."

[An-Noor 24: 51]

This makes it very obvious that the station of the Prophet is not that of a mere orator or preacher or someone who gives sermons on moral values. Rather, he is a teacher, guide, purifier of the soul, judge and law giver. Obeying the Prophet is as good as obeying God, and disobeying the Prophet is as good as disobeying God.

Hereafter

The third fundamental teaching of the Holy Qur'an is that everyone would be raised up after death to lead an eternal life. This is referred to as 'faith in the hereafter'. The importance attached to this creed can be gauged from the fact that there must hardly be a page of the Qur'an which does not have a direct or indirect mention of the hereafter. This belief in the hereafter entails the following things:

The life of this world is but temporary. We see people dying every day. We would also die one day. No person can escape death. But where does man go after dying? What befalls him? These are the questions that cannot be answered on the basis of observation or experimentation. This is something that falls beyond the scope of our sensory organs.

No person can say with any definite knowledge that there is no life after death. This is because he has no basis to put forward this claim. All he can say is that I cannot say on the basis of my observation what would happen after death.

Just like man, this earth and the universe also have a fixed life span, and only God knows how long it is. In other words, this universe is not permanent, it would also die. The Qur'an has put forth this fact with adequate arguments. Today, even science tells us that this earth would indeed die one day.

We see that the Creator has granted men something as precious, priceless and invaluable as life, and has bestowed upon him the gifts of knowledge and intellect, a free will and the freedom of thought and expression. These are man's distinctive traits. God gave man a distinguished place among all the other creations of this world. So should there not be a day when the Creator would ask man what did he do with all these favours- did he use them as a loyal servant or did he turn rebellious and disobedient?

Man's life is not a game. It is not a meaningless and purposeless entity. Life is not just about eating, drinking, having a good time and then retiring to the grave. Far from it, man's life is actually a trial, an examination. Man can attain success in this examination if and only if he has spent his life in the manner his Creator wanted him to, and has fulfilled the

purpose for which he was created in the first place, used His bounties as per His wishes and had been grateful and loyal to Him alone. He ought not to have misused the authority that he was vested with; he should rather have used it as per the guidelines issued by the Creator. The system we have here on earth is too insufficient and lacking to hold everyone accountable and answerable. We need a completely different arrangement for this. This world is the place where man has to appear for the examination, not where he would be rewarded for the examination. The latter requires a different world altogether.

The current world and its system would come to an end at its pre-destined time. The Qur'an calls it *qayamat* (apocalypse) and has explained it in detail. Every detail of man's life- small or big, public or private- is being recorded. Science also testifies to this. The next world, which would be established on new principles and laws, is the place where man's deeds would be scrutinised. All men- from the first to the last- would be assembled that day.

That day, when man would be called to account for his deeds, no intercession or influence or coercion or bribe would hold any value. No one would step forward to save any criminal. No government or king or minister or head of state would exercise any authority. Every person would present himself as a helpless slave of One God, One King, One Master and One Deity. No one would have any say or power.

There, the person who had done good deeds would be declared successful and allowed to enter Paradise. And he who comes there with a dark record would be declared a failure and subjected to eternal perdition.

The person who has had led a comfortable life in this fleeting world by hoarding illicit wealth would not be considered successful before God. He who treads the path of piety and righteousness and is pitiable to the apparent eye cannot be termed unsuccessful. The actual benchmark of success and failure is whether man has followed God's path in this decaying world or not. If he has to endure hardships, deprivation and losses in this way, he is expected to endure them to earn God's good pleasure and the eternal success of the hereafter. His eyes should be fixed on the success of the hereafter. True failure is to neglect the hereafter, perform unrighteous deeds and surround oneself with articles of comfort and luxury by means of injustice and oppression, dishonesty and fraud. A successful man, thus, is one who is declared successful in the divine court of the hereafter, and an unsuccessful man is one who is declared unsuccessful there.

The unseen realities of the hereafter have been explained in the Qur'an in various ways using several arguments,employing knowledge and insight. The Qur'an calls upon man to ponder over them. It is in man's own interest to accept His guidance about these unseen realities, failing which he would have to face an utter loss.

How does this creed influence man's moral values? Dr. Muhammad Rafiuddin Farooqui has this to say:

> *"The realisation that he would be held accountable before God nurtures a pricking conscience within man which keeps him in check whenever he does something. This creed develops righteousness in man. It is for this reason that he keeps away from committing sin even in privacy and even when he has every opportunity to do so. He does not lie or betray anyone or cheat or take bribes or steal or engage in extra-marital affairs or usurp*

anyone's rights. Instead, he helps people in their times of need, provides aid to widows, orphans and the destitute. He spends his hard-earned money in the way of God out of love for Him. He wakes up in the night to pray and tries to outdo others in all acts of worship like prayers, fasting, Hajj and charity and all good deeds for that matter.

In complete contrast, he who does not believe in the hereafter has a very myopic vision that does not allow him to see beyond the pleasures of this world. All he cares for is the immediate benefit he can derive from something, and all he is concerned about is the immediate loss he may have to incur. This makes him usurp other people's rights, deprive others of their share of the inheritance and he becomes blind in his lust for money. He does not pay any attention to the legitimacy of his earnings. He says, 'Why should I feed the orphans and the destitute? Why should I spend my money on them? Why should I help anyone? What would I get in return?' This mentality makes him selfish, greedy and a miser and he eventually becomes conscienceless."

[Qur'an Majeed Ki Buniyadi Taleemat, pp. 78-79]

The Qur'an says:

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ۝٧
اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا
بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ
لَكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٨

"They know what is apparent of the worldly life, but they are unaware of the hereafter. Do they not contemplate within themselves? God has not created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except in truth, and for a specific term.

And indeed, many of the people do not believe that they would meet their Lord." *[Ar-Rum30: 7-8]*

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ
لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ
شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ۝٤

"To Him is your return all together. It is the true promise of God. Indeed, He begins the process of creation and then repeats it that He may justly reward those who have believed and done righteous deeds. But those who disbelieved will have a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment for what they used to deny."

[Yunus 10: 4]

While explaining these ayaat, Maulana Maududi writes:

"While presenting the creed of the hereafter in these ayaat, three supportive arguments have been offered in a logical sequence. The first is that a second life is very much possible. The first life is itself a testimony to the possibility of its occurrence. The second is that a second life is very much required. Reason says that the way in which man discharges his moral obligations in the right or wrong manner, and the need for rewards and punishments that arises as a consequence, makes it necessary to have another life in which every man should be able to see the proper results of his moral attitude. The third argument for a second life is that since it is a requirement of reason and justice, this requirement would certainly be fulfilled. This is because the Creator of this universe is Wise. And it cannot be expected of a Wise God to refrain from creating something that wisdom and justice require."

[Tafheemul Qur'an, Vol 2]

At another place, the Qur'an says:

بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۚ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا
عَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا وَّاٰبَآؤُنَآ اَىِٕنَّا لَمُخْرَجُوْنَ
﴿٦٧﴾ لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هٰذَا نَحْنُ وَاٰبَآؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ
﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

"Rather, their knowledge is limited concerning the hereafter. Rather, they are in doubt about it. Rather, they are blind concerning it. And those who disbelieve say: 'When we and our forefathers have become dust, will we indeed be brought out of the graves? We have been promised this, we and our forefathers, before. This is not but legends of the former peoples.' Say: Travel through the land and observe the end of the criminals."

[Al-Naml 27: 66-69]

While explaining these ayaat, Maulana Maududi writes:

"All the nations of this world which have neglected the hereafter could not save themselves from becoming criminals. They turned irresponsible, committed injustice and tyranny and got immersed in vanities and vulgarities. Their moral depravation eventually led them to ruin. This is a recurring observation in human history to which all the archaeological ruins of past nations bear witness. They tell us that belief and disbelief in the hereafter has a profound effect on the righteousness and unrighteousness of human conduct. If this creed is accepted, the nation remains righteous; and if it is rejected, their conduct gets corrupted. This is proof enough that accepting it concurs with the truth, for accepting it keeps human life on the right track. Likewise, rejecting it is in conflict with the truth, and that is why rejecting it derails this vehicle. The unfailing ruin of those nations which have become criminals in this historical observation clearly testifies to the fact that this universe is not a result of blind permutations and combinations.

Instead, it is a wise system which runs in accordance with a firm law of retribution... Hence, we should learn lessons from past criminals and refrain from insisting upon this foolish attitude of rejecting the hereafter which had made them criminals."

[Tafheemul Qur'an, Vol 3]

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11

The Prophet's Prayers Concerning The Qur'an

(1)

اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّيْ عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ وَابْنُ أَمَتِكَ. نَاصِيَتِيْ بِيَدِكَ. مَاضٍ فِيَّ حُكْمُكَ عَدْلٌ فِيَّ قَضَاؤُكَ. أَسْأَلُكَ بِكُلِّ اسْمٍ هُوَ لَكَ سَمَّيْتَ بِهِ نَفْسَكَ أَوْ أَنْزَلْتَهُ فِيْ كِتَابِكَ أَوْ عَلَّمْتَهُ أَحَدًا مِّنْ خَلْقِكَ أَوِ اسْتَأْثَرْتَ بِهِ فِيْ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ الْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيْمَ رَبِيْعَ قَلْبِيْ وَ نُوْرَ بَصَرِيْ وَ جَلَاءَ حُزْنِيْ وَذَهَابَ هَمِّيْ

"O God! I am Your slave, and the son of Your slave and slave-woman. My forelock is in Your hand. Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You by which You have named Yourself, or revealed in Your book, or You have taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You make the Qur'an the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety." *[Maqbool Dua'en, Abu Saleem M Abdul Hayy, p. 38]*

(2)

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ فِيْ بَلَائِكَ وَصَنِيْعِكَ إِلٰى خَلْقِكَ. وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ فِيْ بَلَائِكَ وَصَنِيْعِكَ إِلٰى أَهْلِ بُيُوْتِنَا. وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ فِيْ بَلَائِكَ وَصَنِيْعِكَ

إِلَى أَنْفُسِنَا خَاصَّةً. وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ بِمَا هَدَيْتَنَا. وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ بِمَا أَكْرَمْتَنَا.
وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ بِمَا سَتَرْتَنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ بِالْقُرْآنِ. وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ إِذَا رَضِيتَ.
يَا أَهْلَ التَّقْوَى وَأَهْلَ الْمَغْفِرَةِ

O God! To You is due all praise and gratitude for the favours and blessings (You have bestowed) and the trials of comfort and pain (that You have destined) for Your creation and the members of our family and especially us. And to You is due all praise and gratitude for having guided us and for having honoured us and for having concealed our (faults and sins) and for the Qur'an and for the family members and wealth and for the ease (You have granted us). And to You is due all praise and gratitude until You are pleased. You alone deserve praise and gratitude. And You alone deserve to be feared and sought forgiveness from." [ibid, pp. 72-73]

(3)

Recite this prayer after having completed a recitation of the Qur'an:

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِيْ بِالْقُرْآنِ وَاجْعَلْهُ لِيْ إِمَامًا وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً. اَللّٰهُمَّ
ذَكِّرْنِيْ مِنْهُ مَا نَسِيْتُ وَ عَلِّمْنِيْ مِنْهُ مَا جَهِلْتُ وَ ارْزُقْنِيْ تِلَاوَتَهُ اٰنَآءَ
الَّيْلِ وَ اٰنَآءَ النَّهَارِ وَ اجْعَلْهُ لِيْ حُجَّةً يَّا رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"Oh God! Have mercy on me through the Qur'an and make it for me a leader and guide and mercy. O God! Make me recollect whatever I have forgotten from it and teach me what I do not know of the Qur'an. And grant me the ability to recite/follow it day and night and make it an argument and proof for me, O Lord of the worlds." *[Ihya' Uloomud Deen]*

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12

A Few Suggestions Before You Embark on the Study of the Qur'an

YOUR DECISION TO study the Qur'an is a very important and blessed one. In the preceding pages, you have come to know that the Qur'an is unlike any other book in this world. The Qur'an is the last book of God, and it fulfils man's greatest need-guidance. Rather, it fulfils it in the best possible manner. There is no other book in this world with which man's success in this world and salvation the hereafter is as linked as it is linked to the Qur'an. This Book is thus your benefactor. It does us a favour by revealing the truth and facts which were unknown to us. And it is not only enough to know the truth, it is equally important to accept the truth. For, if a person is oblivious of the truth, he would also be oblivious of his Creator, his Lord and true deity and also remain oblivious of the purpose of his life. After death, he would suddenly be faced with a situation for which he had not made any preparation in this world whatsoever. This would be a pernicious bargain having eternal consequences.

Be assured of these facts before you begin with the study of the Qur'an. Since life is an examination, man is free to accept or reject the guidance of the Qur'an. But he would be held liable for his choice before God in the hereafter.

When you hold the Qur'an in your hands, do not let it seep in your mind that this is a private book of the Muslim community per se. It should be crystal clear to you that this is God's Book of Guidance, and is meant for all human beings without exception. You need to make a resolve that you are seeking the guidance of your Creator and Lord, and it is for this reason that you are embarking upon its study.

The second important thing is that when you study the Qur'an your intention should not be that my knowledge would increase or that I would become a scholar of the Qur'an or that I would become an expert on the Qur'an. The only intention should be to obtain divine guidance.

Your biggest enemy and obstacle during the study of the Qur'an is none other than the Satan. He had rebelled against God by rejecting His guidance and turned disobedient. And he wants that man too should take the path of rebellion. Hence, you should begin your study with a prayer asking God to enable you to understand the Qur'an properly and to protect you from the obstacles laid down by the Satan.

For you to study the Qur'an, it is necessary that you clear your mind of all preconceived notions and ideas, and read the Qur'an with a clean and open mind. This would help you to steer clear of the obstacles of prejudice, hatred and misconceptions.

You might come across some doubts, confusion and questions while going through the Qur'an. When you do encounter any such passage, never form a hasty opinion and abort the study. Keep reading. As you proceed further, you would get the answers to your questions and your doubts would keep getting solved. But if the confusion still persists, note it

down. The doubt would either be cleared in the next reading, or you can consult a scholar of the Qur'an to help you out with it.

When you open the Qur'an, you would notice that it has the Arabic text on one side. This is the actual Qur'an. The translation of that text would be next to it. The Arabic text of the Qur'an is from God. It does not have a single word written by any man, not even Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

It is hoped that you would give due honour to the Qur'an while studying it. It is advisable to have a bath before you sit with it. Try not to study it when you are very tired, exhausted or feeling sleepy. Most people cannot read the Arabic text; but they can at least behold the words of the One who is the Creator, the Master, the Lord and deity of the universe and derive blessings from it. And it would be wonderful if you learn Arabic as well.

One more suggestion is that you should study it every day. Be punctual and regular with it. Study it in a systematic and orderly manner. It would not take more than a few of your minutes each day, but it would be exceedingly beneficial *in sha Allah*.